Developing a Contemporary Approach to Philosophy as a Way of Life

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Abstract

This dissertation draws upon philosopher Pierre Hadot's conception of philosophy as a way of life, which views philosophy as a process of self-transformation through engaging in practices (which Hadot characterizes as spiritual exercises) alongside theory, enabling the philosopher to move from the all too common state of discord and worry towards greater peace and wisdom. This research focuses on how this approach may be applied in a contemporary context, drawing on the hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer and the philosophy of Ralph Waldo Emerson. It explores a variety of conceptions from these thinkers which may be seen as transformative practices, such as Gadamer's approach to conversation and interpretation, Emerson's profound approaches towards nature, self-realization and spiritual development and the aesthetics of both thinkers. Ancient philosophical viewpoints and practices are considered in relation to Gadamer's and Emerson's thought and linguistic and metaphysical viewpoints are presented as providing alternative discourses supporting practices in a present-day context.

Ágrip

Samtímanálgun á heimspeki sem lífsmáta

Í þessari rannsókn er gengið út frá hugmynd Pierre Hadot um heimspeki sem lífsmáta, þ.e. sjálfsþroskaferli sem á sér stað með iðkun þess sem Hadot kallar andlegar æfingar, ásamt kenningasmíð, og gerir heimspekingnum kleift að hverfa frá innra ójafnvægi og áhyggjum yfir í visku og frið. Rannsóknin beinir sjónum að því hvernig beita megi þessu grundvallarviðhorfi í samtímasamhengi og gerir í því skyni túlkunarfræði Hans-Georgs Gadamer og heimspeki Ralphs Waldo Emerson að viðfangsefni sínu. Skoðað er hvernig hugmyndir þessara hugsuða geta leitt til iðkana sem fela í sér djúpa umbreytingu, s.s. viðhorf Gadamers til samræðu og túlkunar, djúptæk sýn Emersons á náttúru, sjálfið og andlegan þroska, og fagurfræði hugsuðanna beggja. Einnig er athugað hvernig iðkanir og viðhorf úr heimspeki til forna má taka upp og þróa í tengslum við hugsun Gadamers og Emersons og fella þær inn í heimspeki sem lífsmáta í samtímanum.

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Abbreviations

CW *The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, 10 vols. Edited by Alfred R. Ferguson et al. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971-2013.

JMN *The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, 16 vols. Edited by William H Gilman et al. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960-1982.

W *The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, 12 vols. Edited by Edward Waldo Emerson. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1903-04.

Introduction

Philosophy as a way of life is an emerging approach within philosophy based on Pierre Hadot's understanding of ancient philosophy that emphasizes philosophy as a practical method of self-transformation (see Hadot 1995, 2001, 2004). This is a compelling and inspiring approach as it moves beyond the academic emphasis of philosophy being a matter of abstract understanding, pointing to the possibility of a reinvigorated contemporary approach to philosophy that combines both theoretical understanding and practical transformation.

This dissertation draws upon the thinking of Hans-Georg Gadamer and Ralph Waldo Emerson to help develop a practical approach to philosophy that is relevant to contemporary concerns. I think Gadamer and Emerson are very suitable thinkers to focus upon for several reasons. These include that both are practical thinkers who emphasize self-transformation rather than abstract understanding and so are useful thinkers to consider in relation to philosophy as a way of life; given that Hadot emphasizes experiences of transcendence and universality, Gadamer and Emerson are both thinkers who reserve important roles for transcendence, universality, and relational experiences more generally; and, given Hadot's emphasis on ancient philosophy, Gadamer and Emerson are both thinkers that are inspired by ancient philosophical viewpoints but add more dynamic elements into their own thought, which makes them helpful for bridging ancient and modern philosophical perspectives. As we shall see, an important focus within this work is how Gadamer and Emerson present dynamic approaches towards universality that incorporate notions of plurality. In many ways, they also provide complementary viewpoints that lend themselves to counterbalancing the other's position; for example, Gadamer's emphasis on human finitude, openness to the other, and the value of tradition, and the ubiquitous role of language, versus Emerson's emphasis on human infinitude, listening to oneself, the need to break past restrictive societal customs, and the importance of metaphysics. However, underlying these differences is a commitment in both Gadamer and Emerson to conceptions of beauty, order, universality, harmony and goodness, a commonality they have with ancient

philosophical viewpoints. And, as we shall see below, linguistic and metaphysical viewpoints may have more in common than is apparent at first glance.

In Chapter 1, I will introduce Hadot's notion of philosophy as a way of life and consider two thinkers, Michel Foucault and John Cooper, who both, like Hadot, emphasize philosophy as a practical activity but whose vision of what this entails differs in various ways from Hadot's. I introduce and briefly compare Gadamer's and Emerson's thought and point to their relevance as regards to bridging Hadot, who focusses on universality, and Foucault who focusses on plurality and fragmentation. I do this through pointing to forms of dynamic universality within Gadamer's and Emerson's thought, which I develop at various points throughout the dissertation, culminating in the final chapter.

Throughout this dissertation, numerous philosophical practices are drawn from Gadamer's and Emerson's works, with each chapter offering different foci. Chapter 2 focusses on Hadot's conception of dialogue as a spiritual practice and draws upon Gadamer and Emerson to provide practical approaches to help cover the broad vision of Hadot's approach, which points to the value of both outer and inner dialogue. In Chapter 3, Gadamer's, Hadot's and Emerson's differing understandings of the interpretation of tradition are considered and how their approaches provide differing ways to understand interpretation as a self-transformative practice. Chapter 4 introduces Emerson's distinction between reason as a form of intuition which he prioritizes over the discursive thought. In this chapter, the important role of optimism and focussing on ideals that is found in Emerson's thought is explored and a practice of attentiveness to our thoughts and how we use language is suggested, one that is inspired by Stoic conceptions. Chapter 5 explores Gadamer's aesthetics and Emerson's aesthetic and spiritual approaches. Both Gadamer and Emerson emphasize the importance of experiences of unity and a variety of approaches to encourage the practical experience of relational states are presented. Plotinus is drawn upon for spiritual practices that may help bring ordinary representations and habitual viewpoints into question and to help open up more relational perspectives. Chapter 6 explores ancient Greek conceptions of *theoria*, specifically Plato's, and relates these viewpoints to Gadamer's and Emerson's thought and draws upon Gadamer and Emerson for a variety of approaches that encourage the experience of *theoria* in ways that are relevant for present-day

concerns. Chapter 7 explores how Emerson may be drawn upon to help orient Gadamer, who generally emphasizes human culture and language, further towards nature. A variety of practices to engage nature are considered, from aesthetic to contemplative approaches. In this chapter, a connection between Gadamer's focus on language and Emerson's focus on metaphysics is considered, which is further developed in Chapter 8.

In Chapter 8, I point to how Gadamer's linguistic approach may provide a valuable present-day way of supporting the practical task of living according to reason. I discuss how language and metaphysics seem to play similar roles in Gadamer's and Emerson's thought. This insight is drawn upon to consider how language and a dynamic form of metaphysics may both provide ways to articulate philosophical experiences in ways amenable to people of different tastes. A variety of practical approaches are considered, such as a practice encouraging overcoming jealousy which draws upon viewpoints found in Gadamer and Emerson and a practice of being in the present moment.

In summary, this dissertation presents a wide-ranging approach to a possible form that philosophy as a way of life may take in a contemporary context, one which takes Hadot's emphasis on transcendence and universality seriously and develops this in a more dynamic way by drawing upon Gadamer and Emerson. Numerous philosophical practices or what Hadot calls "spiritual exercises" are drawn from Gadamer and Emerson along with some from ancient thought to present a multi-faced approach to practices which may be supported by various forms of discourse relevant to contemporary concerns.[1]

[1] Papers based on parts of the dissertation have been submitted to academic journals and published or accepted for publication. The paper that has been published is: William Konchak. "Self-Transformation: Body, Mind, and Spirit." *Journal of Applied Hermeneutics,* 2017. The paper "Gadamer's Practice of *Theoria*," has been accepted for publication by the journal *Epoché: A Journal for the History of Philosophy*.

Chapter 1 – Hadot, Gadamer and Emerson: Philosophy as a Way of Life in a Contemporary Context

In this chapter, I will outline Pierre Hadot's conception of philosophy as a way of life and show how the practical orientation of Gadamer's and Emerson's thought has a strong affinity with it. I briefly consider Michel Foucault´s understanding of the care of the self, as he is a modern thinker who emphasizes philosophy as a practical activity and was inspired by Hadot´s conception of philosophy as a way of life. Basic similarities and differences between Foucault's and Hadot's viewpoints will be considered. John Cooper, a contemporary thinker who considers philosophy as a way of life in ancient thought but criticizes some of Hadot's viewpoints will also be briefly examined. I will then turn to outlining some key themes in Gadamer's and Emerson's thought and point to a few basic similarities and differences between their viewpoints. Experiences of transcendence are an important aspect of Hadot's conception of philosophical practice and I point to how Gadamer and Emerson provide approaches towards transcendence which may be relevant in a contemporary context. Later chapters will expand upon many of the themes presented in this chapter and explore potential philosophical practices within Gadamer's and Emerson's thought.

Philosophy as a Way of Life

For Pierre Hadot, philosophy is not about abstract thinking that is insulated from life. Instead, philosophy is a way of life and a process of self-transformation aiming to move from the all too common state of discord and worry towards greater peace and wisdom. According to Hadot, in ancient philosophy there were numerous approaches that encouraged this type of development, including self-mastery, listening, reading, meditation, and research. Specific examples include Stoic and Epicurean approaches to living in the present moment; Platonic approaches to dialectics; Neoplatonic spiritual exercises such as that those offered by Plotinus; and the importance of dialogue to help form and improve the philosopher. In respect to modern philosophy, Hadot argues that after an initial optimism to the effect that

thought could "postulate *itself* in an absolute way" (1995, 76), philosophy became more aware of its historical and particularly linguistic conditionings, and he goes on to remark that "[t]his was a legitimate reaction, but it could be that its result has been that philosophers have let themselves be hypnotized by philosophical discourse taken in and for itself"; as such, "philosophical discourse now tends to have as its object nothing but more philosophical discourse" (1995, 76). In other words, "[a]ncient philosophy proposed to mankind an art of living," whereas "modern philosophy appears above all as the construction of a technical jargon reserved for specialists" (1995, 272). Hadot presents philosophy as a way of life as an alternative approach. It was through engaging in practices (which Hadot characterizes as spiritual exercises) and theory applied within the broader context of philosophy as a way of life that the philosopher would transform himself and thus develop greater wisdom and peace. In this way, then, theoretical discourse was not confined to an abstract realm but was used to support practices and so would aid self-transformation in such a way that "[t]heory is never considered an end in itself; it is clearly and decidedly put in the service of practice" (1995, 60). Practices play a crucial role and specific exercises may be used to promote self-transformation, which can generally be seen as a change in focus from limited, vain and egotistic preoccupations and concern and worry towards broader and more profound, detached, and holistic perspectives that lead towards greater wisdom and peace (see Hadot 1995, 2004). Thus, according to Hadot, there ideally is a holistic interplay between theory and practice, and also between the three main branches of philosophy, namely physics,[2] ethics, and logic, all of which play a role in philosophical practice.[3]

For ancient thought more generally, the *telos* of our actions and desires is always happiness (*eudaimonia*, or human flourishing). Although different philosophical schools approached this in different ways, the goal was to

[2] Physics here is taken in the broader sense as used in ancient philosophy, which incorporated metaphysics.

[3] The extent of the incorporation of physics, logic and ethics and the emphasis placed on those varied by school. For example, for the Stoics physics is systematically related to logic and ethics, but for Aristotle the relation of physics as a practice relating to logic and ethics is less clear.

become *eudaimon* by living philosophically.[4] For Hadot, philosophical theory is to be put in the service of philosophical life, and the goal is to transform oneself. Hadot criticized modern attempts to evaluate ancient philosophy from the perspective of systematization**.** According to Hadot, ancient philosophical discourses were undertaken from a particular perspective in answer to particular questions with a practical application. Hadot discusses how it is important to consider the particular context of a philosophical work:

> When we read the works of ancient philosophers, the perspective we have described should cause us to give increased attention to the existential attitudes underlying the dogmatic edifices we encounter. Whether we have to do with dialogues as in the case of Plato, class notes in the case of Aristotle, treatises like those of Plotinus, or commentaries like those of Proclus, a philosopher's works cannot be interpreted without taking into consideration the concrete situation which gave birth to them. They are products of a philosophical school, in the most concrete sense of the term, in which a master forms his disciples, trying to guide them to self-transformation and self-realization. Thus, the written work is a reflection of pedagogical, psychagogic, and methodological preoccupations. (Hadot 1995, 104-105)

Teachings are designed with the self-formation of the disciples in mind and are geared towards the needs of particular audiences and their level of understanding. As such, philosophical works are designed to address a particular situation and it is a mistake to see them as systematic expositions; as Hadot remarks, "[e]ach *logos* is a 'system,' but the totality of *logoi* does not constitute a system" (1995, 105), and he adds that this is true not only of Plato but also of Aristotle.[5] Hadot claims that this has led to bewilderment in the face of alleged inconsistencies and contradictions in Aristotle's doctrines, but, according to Hadot, these can be explained by the fact that each lesson was designed for a concrete situation. Once we see this we may stop judging philosophy by a certain standard of systematic order, which is a modern prejudice. Rather than building an edifice in thought, ancient viewpoints take the form of what may be seen more as a living system where each part is mutually supportive. However, Hadot is generalizing here, and it should be

[4] The term *eudaimon* reflects a broader conception of human flourishing than the word happiness indicates.

[5] *Logos* is a Greek word that translates as word, rational account, thought, speech, ground, and discourse.

noted that systematization did play a role in some schools of philosophical thought; for example, the Stoics upheld a demand for systematic coherence. Nevertheless, this does not take away from the importance of practice in Stoic thought nor from Hadot's general insight into the importance of practice in ancient philosophy.

Gadamer and Emerson are two thinkers who place an emphasis on practical change and communicating in different ways in response to differing contexts. Greek rhetoric was influential on Gadamer's thought and he points to how Plato's and Aristotle's conception of rhetoric includes the need to meet the receiver of philosophical thought at the level that they can understand (Gadamer, 1986a). The sensitivity to a concrete context is also an important aspect of Gadamer's hermeneutics as is apparent in his interpretation of Platonic dialogues. For example, he emphasizes the context of the dialogues and the viewpoints of the participants (see Gadamer, 1980b). In his hermeneutics, Gadamer emphasizes that self-understanding as a process of self-transformation rather than building edifices of thought.

As for Emerson, his essays come from different angles and themes revealing different aspects of experience, the goal of which was not to construct an abstract intellectual system, but rather to promote self-development and self-transformation. Emerson was a professional lecturer who gave lectures to a variety of different audiences and had to sculpt and design his talks with this in mind. Stanley Cavell (2003) finds what he calls perfectionism, which relates to the practical endeavor towards self-improvement, in Emerson's thought. When asked in an interview about perfectionism, Hadot remarks that it is "a handy formulation, which, moreover, corresponds to a tradition going back to Plato" (2011, 176). He later notes that in respect to perfectionism "one might say that it is the quest for a higher state or level of the self. It is thus not only a question of morality" (2011, 176). Perfectionism is the broad effort towards self-improvement and Hadot relates this to modern thinkers such as Emerson, Thoreau, Bergson and Heidegger. There is a clear affinity between Hadot's general outlook and the lived aspects of self-transformation and transcendence in Emerson's thought, whether this is considered in relation to perfectionism or self-realization more generally. As we shall see further below, in both Gadamer's and Emerson thought we find an important emphasis on the lived and practical approach to philosophy which has clear affinities to Hadot's understanding of philosophy as a way of life.

According to Hadot, philosophical practices, which he calls spiritual exercise to reflect their broad scope, had an important role in ancient thought. This was a course of training, and Hadot points to the analogy between the physical exercises of the athlete to develop their bodily strength and the process of how the philosopher "develops his strength of soul, modifies his inner climate, transforms his vision of the world, and, finally his entire being" (1995, 102). For the philosopher this path of development is a path of self-realization and necessitates a shift from ordinary ways of living to a philosophical life. According to Hadot, despite the diversity in the different approaches to ancient philosophy between the different schools of philosophy,

> [t]heir goal is a kind of self-formation, or *paideia*, which is to teach us to live, not in conformity with human prejudices and social conventions – for social life is itself a product of the passions – but in conformity with the nature of man, which is none other than reason. Each in its own way, all the schools believed in the freedom of the will, thanks to which man has the possibility to modify, improve, and realize himself. (1995, 102)

Paideia is a Greek term that refers to a process of education and forming oneself and the perfection of the soul and relates, as Hadot here points out, to the idea of living according to reason. Hadot indicates that a concern with passions was the main concern of all the philosophical schools of antiquity: "[M]ankind's principal cause of suffering, disorder and unconsciousness were the passions: that is, unregulated desires and exaggerated fears" (1995, 83).[6] Hadot points to a "therapeutic of the passions" and explains that "[e]ach school had its own therapeutic method, but all of them linked their therapeutics to a profound transformation of the individual's mode of seeing and being. The object of spiritual exercises is precisely to bring about this transformation" (1995, 83). In respect to the passions, Hadot explains that all the philosophical schools in antiquity held the view that "people are unhappy because they are the slave of their passions […] because they desire things they may not be able to obtain, since they are exterior, alien, and superfluous to them". Based on this, happiness consists in freedom and a "return to the essential: that which is truly 'ourselves,' and which depends on us" (1995, 102). This is a process of

[6] Most modern scholars would agree with this characterization; for example, see Nussbaum (1994).

uncovering *what we are* rather than living according to the passions which cover this up. Hadot states that

> all spiritual exercises are, fundamentally, a return to the self, in which the self is liberated from the state of alienation into which it has been plunged by worries, passions, and desires. The "self" liberated in this way is no longer merely our egoistic, passionate individuality: it is our *moral* person, open to universality and objectivity, and participating in universal nature or thought. (1995, 103)

Each school of philosophy in its own way promoted the transition towards living according to reason, which is an ongoing effort. In this respect, the philosopher lives in an intermediate state and is torn between the non-philosophical and philosophical life and Hadot points to how philosophical practices are means to support the tearing away from one's everyday life. All the philosophical schools in antiquity promoted a different way of life for their disciples that was beyond the ordinary dictates of society, from the radical break that the Cynics undertook to more modest approaches in other schools. Hadot explains that the "practice of spiritual exercises implied a complete reversal of received ideas: one was to renounce the false values of wealth, honors, and pleasures, and turn towards the true values of virtue, contemplation, a simple life-style, and the simple happiness of existing" (1995, 104).

We can see that the shared goal of each philosophical school was to transform and distance the philosopher from common opinion. This is a theme that resonates very strongly with Emerson's strong distaste for conformity, as will be explored further in Chapter 2. In this respect, although Gadamer is a thinker who emphasizes community and agreement, this does not mean a passive acceptance of the status quo. Gadamer encourages a profound questioning which can lead past habitual prejudices and common opinions and his aesthetics points to the possibility of more unitary experiences beyond the norm, so even with Gadamer there is a type of conversion away from conventional purposes and perspectives.

The "cosmic-'physical'" is one of several terms that Hadot employs in his writings to indicate more universal viewpoints (1995, 104). Other similar terms, such as "a view from above" and "cosmic consciousness" will be discussed in later chapters. Put simply, these terms indicate more disinterested, universal, and holistic perspectives that encourage

experiencing reality as it is (that is, generally speaking, a reason-governed cosmos and interconnected whole), rather than egotistic viewpoints and the ordinary life encouraged by society that are based on fulfilling desire. In Greek thought, the nature of man or humankind's highest faculty is reason which has an affinity to the reason that governs the cosmos (or universal reason) to which the philosopher may align him or herself, thus involving a conversion and a process of self-transformation.[7] According to Hadot, for ancient philosophers heightened experiences could not be constantly sustained: "It was impossible to maintain oneself at such heights continuously; this was a conversion that needed always to be reconquered" (1995, 104). Philosophers are not wise but are the lovers of wisdom, and as such they continually are working towards wisdom, which is an on-going process. The challenges of maintaining such insights are well expressed by Emerson who states in his 1841 essay "The Over-Soul" that "our faith comes in moments; our vice is habitual. Yet there is a depth in those brief moments which constrains us to ascribe more reality to them than to all other experiences" (1983, 385). Emerson is a thinker of sudden epiphanies that we may integrate into ourselves and grow from, but he is also well aware of our tendency to backslide, observing, for example in his 1841 essay "The Transcendentalist," how he "in the space of an hour, probably, I was let down from this height," ending up in a position where he "was at […] [his] old tricks, the selfish member of a selfish society" (1983, 215). For Emerson, in line with Hadot's characterization of the ancient philosopher, the integration of heightened insight into one's daily life is an ongoing process that needs to be persistently pursued. For Gadamer, as we will explore below and in later chapters, because of our human finitude understanding is always on the way and will never be complete, but he emphasizes that aesthetic insight is related to and can transform our everyday self-understanding (see Gadamer 2004).

Thus, in summary, although Hadot's conception of philosophy as a way of life certainly reserves an important place for theory, the latter is used to support practices rather than building grand systems for abstract thought. According to Hadot, practices were important in ancient philosophy and helped the philosopher move towards more universal perspectives which encouraged greater peace, wisdom and happiness. His reading of ancient

[7] For the Stoics reason is *logos*, whereas for Plato and Aristotle reason is intellect or *nous*.

philosophy as a way of life helps us reclaim this perspective for contemporary application.

As for Gadamer and Emerson, they both place significant emphasis on practical orientations in their philosophy, which clearly invites considering them in relation to philosophy as a way of life. In this context it should be noted that Hadot describes a broad range of experience within the context of philosophy as a way of life, including dialogue, profound experiences of oneness involving nature, and many other aspects. Both Gadamer and Emerson have emphases that may better cover aspects of these types of experiences. For example, as we shall see in later chapters, Gadamer emphasizes dialogue with others, whereas experiences of inner dialogue and nature are important for Emerson. Hadot articulates a wide scope of perspectives within ancient philosophy but says relatively little about its application in a contemporary context, although this clearly is a crucial impetus of his thought. This dissertation explores how practical approaches found in Gadamer's and Emerson's thought are relevant to philosophy as a way of life in a contemporary context; how Gadamer's and Emerson's thought complement one another in various ways; and how considering Gadamer and Emerson together may better cover the broad range of experience that Hadot explores within ancient philosophy and its contemporary application. We will now turn to considering some of the similarities and differences between Hadot and Michel Foucault's thought in respect to the lived practice of philosophy and its present-day application.

Foucault's Care of the Self and Hadot's Philosophy as a Way of Life: Difference and Universality

Michel Foucault was inspired by Hadot's perspective of philosophy as a way of life with its emphasis of the practical transformation of the philosopher. As Cory Wimberley explains, both Hadot and Foucault were inspired by ancient philosophy as a practice and writes that "[i]n the history of philosophy both thinkers find a body of wisdom that can be cultivated and reworked to serve the present" (2009, 191). However, he also points to what this way of life consists in and how ancient philosophy was drawn upon by Foucault and Hadot differs. We will explore some of these differences below.

Foucault explores what he calls the cultivation or the "care of the self" and claims that this was an important theme in ancient Greek philosophy and culture. He writes:

> The precept according to which one must give attention to oneself was […] an imperative that circulated among a number of different doctrines. It also took the form of an attitude, a mode of behavior; it became instilled in ways of living; it evolved into procedures, practices, and formulas that people reflected on, developed, perfected and taught. It thus came to constitute a social practice, gave rise to relationships between individuals, to exchanges and communications, and at times even to institutions. And it gave rise, finally, to a certain mode of knowledge and to the elaboration of a science. (1986, 44-45)

Thus Foucault, like Hadot, places a strong emphasis on philosophy as a practice and as an art of living. For Foucault (2005, 10), the emphasis on the care of the self emerged with Socrates and was present throughout ancient thought and Christianity. According to Foucault, this approach of caring for the self is one that culminated in later antiquity**.** He explains that "the first two centuries of the imperial epoch can be seen as the summit of a curve: a kind of golden age in the cultivation of the self," although he notes that this type of cultivation was very limited to select social groups (1986, 45). On Foucault's account, philosophers did not reserve the emphasis on caring for oneself only for their own mode of life but encouraged it as a valuable principle for everyone, young and old, to follow throughout their life (1986, 47-49). Foucault notes the need to set aside time for the activity of self-cultivation, which may take different forms, from a few moments in the morning to giving oneself entirely over to practices later in life. Thus, Foucault finds among the ancients a strong emphasis on practice and self-transformation and Foucault discusses a variety of approaches from different philosophical traditions, such as meditations, reflecting on the day, caring for the body, the recollection of truths, and introspection. Foucault points to the importance of speaking and writing and in general communicating with others, such that the activity of taking care of oneself "constituted, not an exercise in solitude, but a true social practice" (1986, 51). Hadot also points to the importance of the community found within the ancient philosophical schools to support philosophical practice (2004, 277). We can see that Foucault, like Hadot, has a similar notion of philosophy as a practice and process of self-transformation and Hadot agrees with Foucault's interpretation in many respects:

> what Foucault calls "practices of the self" do indeed correspond, for the Platonists as well as for the Stoics, to a movement of conversion towards the self. One frees oneself from exteriority, from personal attachment to exterior objects, and from the pleasures they may provide. One observes oneself, to determine whether one has made progress in this exercise. One seeks to be one's own master, to possess oneself, and find one's happiness in freedom and inner independence. I concur on all these points. (1995, 211)

From this, we see a broad agreement between the two thinkers with regard to the way that philosophical practices promote self-transformation. However, according to Hadot, this "movement of interiorization is inseparably linked" to another movement of exteriorization where "one rises to a higher psychic level" and obtains a different relation to the exterior world. He writes:

> This is a new way of being-in-the-world, which consists in becoming aware of oneself as a part of nature, and a portion of universal reason. At this point, one no longer lives in the usual, convention human world, but in the world of nature. […] one is then practicing "physics" as a spiritual exercise. (1995, 211)

In this way, one identifies oneself with nature, or with universal reason, as it is present within each individual. When discussing the importance of the "view from above" for ancient thought, Hadot notes that the experience of universality was common to all the schools of ancient thought, with the exception of skepticism (1995, 242). For Hadot this sense of universality and interconnection to a greater whole was a crucial element of ancient thought and he also seeks to relate this to present-day use. Hadot feels that Foucault left out this important conception in his approach, although he remarks that he understands why Foucault did so as his approach is

> a tacit attempt to offer contemporary mankind a model of life, which Foucault calls "an aesthetics of existence." Now, according to a more or less universal tendency of modern thought, which is perhaps more instinctive than reflective, the ideas of "universal reason" and "universal nature" do not have much meaning any more. It was therefore convenient to "bracket" them. (1995, 208)

Hadot sees Foucault's approach as an attempt to articulate philosophy as an active practice relevant to the contemporary world and so he avoids incorporating viewpoints of universality that may not be amenable to contemporary perspectives. Given that Hadot acknowledges the challenges

of applying some conceptions of universality in a contemporary context, later chapters will examine how Hadot addresses this concern and explores how Gadamer and Emerson may be drawn upon to help conceive universality and transcendence in ways that are relevant to present-day concerns.

Foucault's approach emphasizes self-fashioning rather than an experience of transcendent universality that Hadot finds so important. In his exploration of the care of the self, Foucault characterizes the ultimate goal of philosophical conversion as being an "ethics of control" (1986, 65), with the goal of becoming one's own master, and he notes that what is at stake here is a "delight in oneself" implying that one becomes an object of pleasure for oneself (1986, 65-66). More generally, Foucault's understanding of creating one's life as a work of art and of the aesthetics of existence involves a process of self-creation rather than uncovering pre-existing objective truth. As Alexander Nehamas explains, "the care of the self was not a process of discovering who one truly is but of inventing and improvising who one can be. Foucault's model for the care of the self was the creation of art" (1998, 178). Hadot feels that Foucault's conception leaves out a vital aspect of the experience of ancient philosophy and, thus, falls into a type of Dandyism: "M. Foucault is propounding a culture of the self which is *too* aesthetic. In other words, this may be a new form of Dandyism, late twentieth-century style" (1995, 211). Interestingly, Foucault describes the motivation of his search for truth as "curiosity—the only kind of curiosity, in any case, that is worth acting upon with a degree of obstinacy: not the curiosity that seeks to assimilate what is proper for one to know, but that which enables one to get free of oneself" (1992, 8). Foucault points to the activity of philosophy in current times as cultivating the possibility of thinking differently, and he points to his own works that study history as philosophical exercises which could help free thought from its implicit assumptions (1992, 9). Of course, Hadot too is seeking to challenge implicit assumptions in philosophical thought that currently tend to neglect seeing philosophy as a lived practice. However, Foucault's concerns include undermining and resisting inherited conceptions of truth, and the type of universality that Hadot finds in ancient thought and emphasizes more generally may be problematic from Foucault's perspective. In this sense, it would seem that both Foucault and Hadot set themselves the goal of exploring ways to promote transformation but take alternative routes towards this end and have different visions of what this

may consist in and result in. Wimberley points out that "[t]hese two philosophers provide contemporary positions and openings into debates that have roiled philosophy since the pre-Socratics: Hadot seeks unity and conformity to the universal while Foucault seeks to fracture universalizing powers in order to seek freedom from their tyranny" (2009, 192). This returns us again to the point that for Hadot universal reason in ancient thought is something to align ourselves with, whereas for the post-modern Foucault such objective universals may be problematic. Wimberley writes in respect to Foucault that:

> He embraces the limits of philosophical reason and uses it as a positive force to create the space to refuse, modify, or create norms and not merely submit to the True and the Universal. However, if Hadot is right, then Foucault's push for widening the space of difference may be only to bring himself and others farther from the love and order of the Universal. (2009, 200)

This seems to be the crux of the matter, as for Hadot the experience of the universal leads to an overcoming of false and limited conceptions of self, whereas for Foucault this could be a false universal, which if followed, could lead to domination and normalization. Rather than following a universal, Foucault emphasizes self-creation. Thus, although Foucault and Hadot both agreed that philosophy was and should be a lived practice, they emphasize two different approaches to what the practice of philosophy consists in.

For Hadot, philosophy as a way of life can take a number of forms and is a choice of life. He maintains that "[e]veryone is free to define philosophy as he likes, to choose whatever philosophy he wishes, or to invent – if he can – whatever philosophy he may think valid" (1995, 272). He notes that "we shall find in the ancient traditions of the various philosophical schools – Socratism, Platonism, Aristotelianism, Epicureanism, Stoicism, Cynicism, Skepticism – models of life, fundamental forms in accordance with which reason may be applied to human existence, and archetypes of the quest for wisdom" (1995, 273). According to Hadot, each school of philosophy in antiquity can offer different approaches and provide models of life that we may choose from, a "privileged field for experimentation," as long as "we reduce these philosophies to their spirit and essence, detaching them from their outmoded cosmological and mythical elements, and disengaging from them the fundamental propositions that they themselves considered essential" (1995, 273). This is quite a free conception, in that each school

provides a difference choice of life which we in the present-day may choose from, provided that the out of date elements of the theories are detached from the practices. However, as we have also seen, Hadot points to the importance of transcendence towards the universal and living according to reason for the present-day application of philosophical practice that reflect their "spirit and essence". In respect to Hadot's criticism of Foucault, Wimberley asks, "[w]hy does Hadot reject Foucault's turn to aesthetics if his own choice to pursue the Universal is based on taste and preference and not the Truth?" (2009, 196). As Wimberley explains, for Hadot, based on his readings of Wittgenstein, language is limited and cannot represent the All and as such we should experiment with different positions as each can capture a different aspect of truth. In this respect, different approaches to philosophy are valuable. Wimberley explains that Foucault's viewpoint becomes an issue for Hadot as "Hadot understands Foucault not just to be studying an aesthetics of existence but also to be 'propounding a culture of the self' in the present" (2009, 196). That is, for Hadot, as a matter of individual choice or taste we are each free to choose our own philosophical path; however, he feels that the pursuit of universals is an important viewpoint for philosophy as a way of life in a present-day context and that this is under some threat from Foucault's position. As Wimberley explains, "Hadot seems to believe that Foucault wanted to develop a focus on aesthetics as the Dandy's aesthetic—as some kind of attractiveness cultivated for pleasure—and this beauty would drive out or subsume the appropriate use of philosophy in evoking the universal" (2009, 196).[8] As we have seen above in our exploration of the importance of the universal in Hadot's conceptions and his criticisms of Foucault, this characterization would seem quite apt. In this respect, it should also be noted that Hadot criticizes Foucault's interpretation of the Stoics as cultivating pleasure; instead, he points to how they emphasized joy and virtue and experiences of self-transcendence.[9]

[8] It should be noted that Wimberley (2009) goes on to defend Foucault's position against Hadot's charges of Dandyism.

[9] Hadot writes: "Foucault presents Greco-Roman ethics as an ethics of the pleasure one takes in oneself," and he contends that this is wrong, specifically pointing to the Stoic distinction between pleasure and joy. He mentions a letter of Seneca's that Foucault interprets and comments: "If the Stoics insist on the world *gaudium*/'joy,' it is precisely because they refuse to introduce the principle of pleasure into moral life. For them, happiness does not consist in pleasure, but in virtue itself, which is its own reward. Long

Hadot and Foucault, despite their differences, have similar notions of philosophy as a practical activity that leads to self-transformation. Foucault, in *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* points to a "Cartesian moment" in the history of Western thought, by which he means that there is a turn away from the care of the self and the sense that one must transform oneself in order to experience truth in favor of more abstract notions of truth. Foucault discusses this transformative aspect of truth in relation to spirituality and notes that throughout antiquity transformation and the experience of truth were hardly ever separate (2005, 17).[10] In respect to modern times, Foucault suggests:

> I think the modern age of the history of truth begins when knowledge itself and knowledge alone gives access to the truth. That is to say, it is when the philosopher (or the scientist, or simply someone who seeks the truth) can recognize the truth and have access to it in himself and solely through his activity of knowing, without anything else being demanded of him and without him having to change or alter his being as subject.[11] (2005, 17)

When we consider how Foucault links the experience of truth to self-transformation in respect to his understanding of the care of the self, this not only has strong similarities to Hadot's conceptions of philosophy as a practical activity,[12] but also to Gadamer's conception that all understanding is self-understanding (we are changed in the act of understanding) and the participatory and self-transformative intuitive experiences that Emerson

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before Kant, the Stoics strove jealously to preserve the purity of intention of the moral consciousness" (1995, 207).

[10] Foucault points to Aristotle as an exception.

[11] Burnyeat also who points to the how the contemporary philosopher is insulated from the matters that he is considering: "Nowadays, if a philosopher finds he cannot answer the philosophical question 'What is time?' or 'Is time real?', he applies for a research grant to work on the problem during next year's sabbatical. He does not suppose that the arrival of next year is actually in doubt. Alternatively, he may agree that any puzzlement about the nature of time, or any argument for doubting the reality of time, is in fact a puzzlement about, or an argument for doubting, the truth of the proposition that next year's sabbatical will come, but contend that this is of course a strictly theoretical or philosophical worry, not a worry that needs to be reckoned with in the ordinary business of life. Either way he *insulates* his ordinary first-order judgements from the effects of his philosophising" (2012, 316).

[12] Arnold Davidson recounts that "Foucault's discussion of the relation between spirituality and philosophy is, as he himself told me, the fruit of his encounter with the work of Pierre Hadot on the tradition of spiritual exercises" (2005a, xxxix, note 21).

emphasizes. In respect to Emerson, Arsić and Wolfe (2010) explain that some have claimed Emerson is not a philosopher due to such factors as the poetic nature of his thought and that he comes from multiple perspectives rather than building philosophical systems. They explain that Emerson to some extent opposes "the absolute privilege philosophy gives to rational discourse," and claim that criticism of Emerson "presupposes a particular understanding of what philosophy is, and hence privileges a certain idea of rationality" (2010, xxiii). As a part of this discussion, they mention how for Emerson truth was something achieved through self-reformation and that "[t]o those who don't see philosophy as a pragmatics of self-transformation but instead as a cognition that does not have to transform the subject of knowing, Emerson's thesis may sound unphilosophical" (2010, xxiv). However, they point out that in taking this approach Emerson is following nineteenth century thought that incorporated pragmatics into philosophy, and go on to cite the following quote from one of Foucault's public lectures:

> All of nineteenth century philosophy—well, almost all: Hegel anyway, Schelling, Nietzsche, the Husserl of the *Krisis*, and Heidegger as well…In all these philosophies, a certain structure of spirituality tries to link knowledge, the activity of knowing, and the conditions and effects of this activity, to a transformation in the subject's being…. The entire history of nineteenth century philosophy can, I think, be thought of as a kind of pressure to try to rethink the structures of spirituality within a philosophy.[13] (2010, xxv)

The transformation of the philosopher is of course the key aspect of Hadot's viewpoint of philosophy as a way of life and of Gadamer's thought as well. Arsić and Wolfe point out that if Emerson is excluded from being considered a philosopher due to his understanding of truth as transformation this would in fact "exclude him from the broader context of nineteenth-century Continental philosophy" (2010, xxv). However, when philosophy is understood as a transformative activity or way of life is, Emerson may quite rightfully be viewed as a philosopher. Stanley Cavell maintains that Emerson is a thinker who is interested in the ordinary and in life as it is lived and remarks that Emerson's approach to thinking has is "an attitude toward or investment in words that Emerson's view seems to depend upon, an attitude allegorical of an investment in our lives that I believe those trained in

[13] We may note that, on Foucault's list, we can also see a number of thinkers that influenced Gadamer

professional philosophy are trained to disapprove of" (2003, 143).[14] This brings us back to Hadot's point that philosophy has moved away from being a way of life and that it should seek to return to its practical emphasis. Given the importance of self-transformation for Emerson, he is a compelling thinker to consider in relation to philosophy as a way of life, which we shall explore below and in later chapters.

Thus, we can see that for all four thinkers — Hadot, Foucault, Emerson and Gadamer — that practice plays an important role and that all four formulate notions of self-transformation that occurs through the experience of truth. In this respect they are all in broad agreement. However, whereas Hadot emphasizes the overcoming the self through a transcendence towards universality, Foucault emphases the importance of the fragmentary and particular. It will be explored in later chapters how Gadamer and Emerson take approaches that may articulate more fluid positions that incorporates both a sense of universality and a role for particulars and creativity.

John Cooper's Understanding of Philosophy as a Practice in Ancient Thought and his Criticism of Hadot

John Cooper explores how philosophy was a way of life in ancient philosophy and he discusses how philosophy in modern times has largely lost touch with its lived sense, mostly focusing on theoretical discourse. In this sense he is largely in agreement with Hadot. Cooper traces aspects of this divergence between ancient and modern philosophy, and in respect to moral philosophy points to a shift in modern philosophy "away from good and bad character and toward morally right and wrong action" (2012, 4), a move away from virtue ethics towards utilitarian and deontological theory. Cooper points to the inherent practical application of moral philosophy to life but argues that "only in antiquity […] did philosophy realize to the fullest extent all that moral philosophy's combination of theory and practice might involve" (2012, 6). He explains:

> beginning with Socrates […] ancient philosophers made philosophy the, and the only authoritative, foundation and guide for the whole of human life, not just to questions of right and wrong action—a limited part of anyone's life. For these thinkers, only reason, and what reason could discover and establish as

[14] Cavell emphasizes words as he relates Emerson's thought to ordinary language philosophy.

> the truth, could be an ultimately acceptable basis on which to live a life—and for them philosophy is nothing more, but also nothing less, than the art or discipline that develops and perfects the human capacity of reason. (2012, 6)

In Cooper's view, ancient philosophy had a much broader sense of philosophy as a lived practice, which he emphasizes was associated with reason,[15] not only in respect to understanding philosophical conceptions, but reason also served as motivation to live from one's philosophy, a life according to reason. Ancient philosophy was far more integrated than modern conceptions and moral philosophy could not be segregated off from other aspects of philosophy, such as the study of nature and metaphysics (2012, 7). As we have pointed out previously, Hadot also discusses the integrated nature of ancient philosophy with a connection between logic, ethics and physics, so in this sense he and Cooper agree. For ancient thinkers, reason was something that one lived according to and so could not be disconnected from one's life, whereas modern conceptions of truth, as a consequence of what Foucault terms "the Cartesian moment," are often more abstract.

Cooper writes that "[m]ost of philosophy today is truly an exclusively theoretical discourse, with no direct connections to the conduct of one's life" (2012, 16). Based on this he wonders what one is to do if one wants to study philosophy as a vital subject that may change one's life in a positive way, and concludes that "[t]here seems to be no viable alternative except to study ancient philosophy—or rather, the ancient philosophies, in the plural—in the spirit in which they were written, that is, with a view to one's own self-improvement" (2012, 16). Hadot certainly shares these concerns about the excessively theoretical nature of contemporary philosophy and presents philosophy as a way of life as an alternative approach. However, Cooper's surprisingly dim view of contemporary philosophy is somewhat at odds with Hadot's. Despite Hadot's concerns about contemporary philosophy, he also points to the possibility of philosophy as a way of life in modern thinkers such as Emerson, Thoreau, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche, as well as within strands such as existentialism and modern aesthetics. However, this difference in perspective is quite possibly explained by how Cooper

[15] For ancient thinkers, reason was not just rationality, but was associated with an experience of the divine, the cosmos, and universality more generally. In this respect, Cooper seems to be strongly emphasizing a rational conception.

characterizes his view of ancient philosophy and what he considers philosophy to be:

> In speaking of ancient philosophy I have been assuming that for the ancients with whom I am concerned, exactly as with us, the essential core of philosophy is a certain, specifically and recognizably philosophical, style of logical, reasoned argument and analysis. Anyone who has read any philosophy at all is familiar with this style, whether it takes the form we find in the question-and-answer dialectic of the character Socrates in Plato's Socratic dialogues, or in the medieval disputation, or in Hegel's elaborations of his system of Absolute Idealism, or, again in the writings of a contemporary analytic philosopher. The idea of philosophy as constituted essentially by devotion to rigorous, sensitively logical and disciplined thought, in pursuit of a philosophically grounded, ultimate truth about the world and our place in it, goes back, in fact, to Plato. (2013, 17)

It would seem that Cooper is propounding a very rationalistic view of philosophy of an analytic bent, which would seem to be quite different from the spirit of Hadot's conception of philosophy. Although Hadot certainly considers the importance of rationality and reason in both ancient and modern thought, he also sees philosophy as a broader pursuit.[16] As John Cottingham points out, "[f]or those committed to the traditional conception of what makes philosophy worth doing, the way the subject has developed in the contemporary Anglophone philosophical world perhaps presents an even gloomier picture than the developments charted by Hadot" (2013, 149). In this sense, it would seem that Cooper's vision of contemporary philosophy may limit him from seeing some of the possibilities of philosophy a way of life in a contemporary context that Hadot suggests. In this respect, Gadamer and Emerson are good vehicles for a broader conception of philosophy, as both incorporate rational, imaginative, aesthetic, and intuitive perspectives, which will be the subject of exploration in later chapters.[17]

Cooper criticizes Hadot for his contention that there were "spiritual exercises" in ancient philosophy and maintains that it was only in late

[16] When discussing why he chose term spiritual for his term spiritual exercises, Hadot explains that he wanted to indicate the broad nature of the exercises which includes thought and ethics but is more than this and involves a transformation of the entire personality, the experience of objective spirit and the Whole (see Hadot 1995, 81-82).

[17] In fact, they may both provide intermediate perspectives between the more rational Hadot and the aesthetic Foucault.

antiquity that philosophy was associated with a religious way of life.[18] According to Cooper, Hadot correctly documented the combination of Pagan philosophy and Christian religion and to which he justly ascribes "spiritual exercises," but he incorrectly relates this back to early Greek thought. What Cooper seems to be most concerned about here is that Greek thought and philosophical thought more generally be considered rationalistic and devoid of any non-rational elements. However, myth and the divine play an important role in Platonic thought,[19] and Gadamer points out that "[p]hilosophy and religion shared common ground through the whole history of Greek rationality" (1999, 83).[20] Gadamer has concerns about the colonizing tendencies of scientific thought and he explains that the "Enlightenment schema of the demystification of the world, the irreversible path from mythos to logos, seems too simple" (1999, 123). Later he remarks that "[f]rom the standpoint of the enlighteners, religion reflects merely the childhood of humanity" (1999, 123). Gadamer writes that "the mythic tradition and tidings of the divine went hand in hand with the enlightenment

[18] Cooper's emphasizes the philosopher follows reason which in his view separates the philosophical from a religious way of life which he associates with "living on the basis of a sacred text or tradition, validation through an intense personal feeling" (2013, 18). Interestingly enough, when Hadot himself considers the conception of moral conscience in Stoic thought he writes, "[c]an we speak of religion here? I do not think so. The word 'philosophy' is enough, I think, to describe the purity of this attitude, and we ought to avoid mixing with philosophy all the vague and imprecise implication, both social and mythical, which the notion of religion brings with it" (2001, 309). This indicates that Hadot was also concerned about not confounding religion with philosophy. Although Hadot acknowledges the importance of rationality in philosophy and philosophical practice, he does not seem to wish to limit the experience of philosophy to rationality and uses the word spiritual to point to a broader conception of philosophy.

[19] In her review of Cooper's book Rachana Kamtekar (2014) takes issue with what she sees as Cooper's excessive emphasis on rational thought in ancient philosophy and the contrast he makes between religion and philosophy. Instead, Kamtekar points to the role of wisdom and truth in ancient thought.

[20] Nevertheless, Gadamer recognizes that such an integration of religion in Greek philosophical thought does involve removing some religious elements: "The pride of the new forms of thought is that they can integrate the religious tradition with their new knowledge. That, admittedly, cannot occur without 'purifying' the religious tradition. Just as the whole of Greek poetry is a history of purifying the representation of the gods in the epics, so philosophy too undertakes the task of purification, in that it eliminates anthropomorphic elements from the representations of the gods and tries to ascertain only those that are verifiable in thought" (1999, 38-39).

impulse of Greek thought" and maintains that the Greeks reached a productive equilibrium between enlightenment and their religious tradition (1999, 82). Therefore, Gadamer certainly saw a broader conception of philosophy in ancient thought and aesthetic perspectives in his own hermeneutic thought reflects this broader vision of philosophy.[21]

In respect to the historical dating of spiritual exercises, Cooper contends:

> Those nonrational practices that Hadot describes as "spiritual exercises"—meditation, self-exhortation, memorization, and recitation to oneself of bits of sacred text, causing in oneself devoted prayerful or prayer-like states of consciousness and mystical moments—had, and could have, at most a secondary and very derivative function in the philosophical life during the heyday of ancient philosophy. (2013, 22)

However, he acknowledges that with late Platonist philosophers a stronger sense of an individual came about during that time, and that "spiritual exercises came to occupy a more central place in the way of life of philosophy" (2013, 22). So there seems to be little contention between Cooper and Hadot in respect to later antiquity incorporating philosophical practices with components beyond rationality.

In respect to the question of whether philosophical practices of a nature that Hadot maintains were undertaken in ancient philosophy, Matthew Sharpe explores Cooper's contentions against Hadot and points to Epictetus' strong emphasis on existential and spiritual exercises and remarks that this "hardly sounds like doing philosophy 'exactly as with us' as Cooper tells us the ancients proceeded" (2014, 385). This is a good point, and we might broaden this consideration to how Greek conceptions of *nous*,[22] Platonic conceptions of Divine madness such as presented in the *Phaedrus*, and Platonic and Aristotelian conceptions of *theoria* may also significantly differ from contemporary philosophical perspectives. Sharpe considers Cooper's

[21] F. M. Cornford (1957) points to the continuity between the emergence of philosophy in ancient Greece and religion.

[22] For Plato and Aristotle, *nous* is the highest faculty of humankind and has an affinity to divine objects (e.g. Forms in Plato's case). Through noetic activity the philosopher identifies with such objects and becomes like them.

contention that Hadot's spiritual exercises can only be connected with late antiquity[23] and maintains that

> what seems decisive to us is that Cooper is simply unable to conceive the way that, in Hadot's conception and more widely, there is no just need to associate the "spiritual exercises" we see on such ample display in Epictetus's recommendations in the *Encheiridion*—and also in Aurelius's *Meditations*, as well as the Epicurean fragments, etc.—with any kind of extra-philosophical longing for other-worldly redemption. (2014, 386)

Sharpe points to textual evidence that shows the importance of spiritual practices for Epictetus and writes of "Epictetus's very evident willingness to explicitly recommend modes of existential or spiritual practice to students who wish to live as Stoics" (2014, 385). This points towards Hadot's conception of spiritual exercises as being valid for the Imperial period, so in this respect philosophical practices not only seem to have played a role in later antiquity, but in Hellenistic philosophy as well. Cottingham (2013) explains that much of Hadot's work related to philosophy as a way of life draws on Hellenistic perspectives and considers whether such Hellenistic conceptions can be seen as a "silver age" of philosophy next to a higher "gold standard" for Plato and Aristotle. He writes:

> what we seem to find [with Plato and Aristotle] is less in the way of recipes for tranquil living, and much more in the way of logical argumentation, conceptual analysis, the search for accurate definitions, and abstract inquiries about language and meaning – in short, the very elements that form the meat and drink of modern analytic philosophy. (2013, 152)

In relation to this, he ponders on the viewpoint that the modern analytic philosopher is the true inheritor of the pure tradition of philosophy of Plato and Aristotle and that philosophy as a way of life may actually be an aberration, but soon goes on to reject this. He maintains that this viewpoint ignores that "the logical and conceptual inquiries of Plato and Aristotle were very much in the service of metaphysics, a vision of reality and man's place within it" (2013, 152). He notes that alongside Socrates' search for

[23] Scholarly reaction to Hadot's emphasis on philosophy as a way of life has generally been that he has justified it as an important viewpoint, but that there are differences between different epochs and schools that need further consideration; as an example, see Donald Zeyl's (2003) review of Hadot's book *What is Ancient Philosophy?*

definitions and conceptions, which seem to run close to how contemporary analytic thinkers view philosophy, there was a moral commitment to achieving a virtuous life. He also points to how Plato envisages a training for the elite that was a discipline of the soul to make it fit for "the pursuit of wisdom" (2013, 153), and maintains that philosophy for Plato was both intellectual and moral. In respect to Aristotle, he notes, among other things, that philosophy was a moral undertaking to pursue human flourishing and the cultivation of wisdom. Cottingham concludes that the "underlying conception of philosophy that inspired the two great founders of the subject is thus fully in accord with Hadot's verdict on the general tenor of ancient philosophy, from its Socratic and Platonic roots, through its Hellenistic phase, and right down to the Neoplatonic writers to the third century AD" (2013, 154). Here we find support for the broad-based conception of philosophy as a practical pursuit of wisdom in ancient thought that is at the core of Hadot's understanding of philosophy as a way of life.

Although it is beyond the scope of this research to attempt to definitively establish the relation between spirituality and rationality in ancient Greek thought and the precise role of philosophical practices in each period of thought, the discussion above suggests that there is a wider scope beyond rationality in ancient thought that Cooper tends to downplay. The importance of spirituality for the ancients and, for example, the moral commitment that Cottingham points to, indicates a broad conception of what the rational was for ancient thinkers, one that encompasses more intuitive (be this conceived as religious, mythic, metaphysical, poetic, spiritual or otherwise) perspectives. Therefore, it would seem that the multi-faceted and practical approach that Hadot articulates through philosophy as a way of life reveals important aspects of ancient thought and provides a helpful viewpoint that may inspire contemporary philosophy. Gadamer and Emerson are two thinkers who articulate broad perspectives of philosophical and reflective activity and have an important place for practical application and self-transformation in their thought. As such, their approaches would seem to be quite compelling to consider in relation to philosophy as a way of life in a contemporary context.

Gadamer and Emerson: A Brief Comparison

One of the greatest challenges in relating Gadamer to Emerson is that they come from two different traditions and there is a little research relating these two thinkers. Gadamer was a twentieth century German thinker associated with Continental philosophy and Emerson was a nineteenth century American thinker associated with Transcendentalism. Despite this gap in time and place, they share a number of common influences, such as German Idealism, Romanticism, Plato and Neo-Platonism and Christian and Ancient Greek thought more generally. In this section, I will present the basic positions of Gadamer's and Emerson's thought and point to some of the similarities and differences in their thought and relate this to how they approach the shared themes of transcendence, finitude and infinity. This will serve as a basis for a deepening exploration in later chapters.

Gadamer's Hermeneutics

Gadamer's hermeneutics is closely related to phenomenology which famously orients itself according to the slogan, dating back to Husserl's *Logical Investigations* (1900-01), "back to the things themselves!" (cf. Heidegger 2010, 26). In this respect, Gadamer is to a significant degree influenced by the work of Martin Heidegger and his hermeneutics of facticity and existence, as reflected in Gadamer's view that we already find ourselves in a world which has certain limitations and possibilities. Meaning stems out of our engagement with the world and our ongoing development in relation to it, and for Gadamer understanding is a happening or event that takes place within our lived situation within time. This is not the experience of an isolated subject or under the willful control of a subject, but rather is a dynamic event that overtakes or appropriates us. As Nicholas Davey notes, "[t]hat understanding *occurs*, that it happens to us contrary to our willing and doing, is something about which Gadamer is emphatic" (2006, 33). Thus, Gadamer stresses, following Heidegger, it is language that speaks us.

For Gadamer, for the human being experiences of truth are possible, but this is partial and in this process there is a revealing and concealing. According to Gadamer, self-understanding occurs within the medium of language and is always incomplete and ongoing. Tradition is something that we already find ourselves in, but it is also something which we may draw upon as a source of truth. In Gadamer's view, what is handed down to us

within tradition has an authority that we may draw upon to help orient our lives. In Gadamer's thought, this involves an experience of universality and transcendence; for example, he writes that "[e]very single individual who raises himself out of his natural being to the spiritual finds in the language, customs, and institutions of his people a pre-given body of material which, as in learning to speak, he has to make his own" (2004, 13). This points to the potential truth that lies within language and tradition for us to experience and creatively apply back into our concrete situation and lives. We will explore Gadamer's conception of tradition further in Chapter 3.

Gadamer places a strong emphasis on human finitude, and he maintains that "[e]very experience worthy of the name thwarts an expectation" (2004, 350). He also notes that the "experienced man knows that all foresight is limited and all plans uncertain. In him is realized the truth value of experience" (2004, 351). In this respect, Gadamer is countering a conception of knowledge as a progressive movement towards clear insight and mastery and control. For Gadamer, human experience is not about gathering information, but rather certain experiences must be undergone and they change us. For Gadamer these upheavals may encourage revising our prejudices and adopting broader and more fluid perspectives, and thus involves a process of self-transformation. Nevertheless, although Gadamer emphasizes the Socratic virtue of knowing that one does not know, there is also some insight involved:

> Insight is more than the knowledge of this or that situation. It always involves an escape from something that had deceived us and held us captive. Thus insight always involves an element of self-knowledge and constitutes a necessary side of what we called experience in the proper sense. Insight is something we come to. It too is ultimately part of the vocation of man—i.e., to be discerning and insightful. (2004, 356)

This is a process that may lead to self-transformation and is an ongoing task that is never completed, a "vocation of man" or, said another way, a "way of life," and is arguably a primary hermeneutic practice. As we shall see in Chapter 2 and 3, an important way that this is accomplished for Gadamer is through the process of transcending oneself through conversing with others and through our relation to tradition. James Risser explains that for Gadamer, through our mistakes and disappointments "what we learn through suffering is the insight into the limitations of humanity, the religious

insight into the boundary that separates the human from the divine" and of "the uncertainty of all predictions and the folly of attempting to master the future" (1997, 91). For Gadamer we never will obtain a perfect and transparent knowledge, but rather understanding is always limited and on the way. We will always have prejudices, but he looks on this in a more positive sense than this word is normally taken to imply; that is, prejudices are entry points and possibilities for understanding, and they may also be revised and improved upon. However, given the sense of human finitude for Gadamer, prejudices can never be completely removed.

Important for Gadamer's hermeneutics is Heidegger's conception of Being.[24] Davey notes that "[t]he question of Being is important to showing how philosophical hermeneutics can retrieve a doctrine of transcendence without returning to metaphysics" (2010, 30). Davey explains that for Heidegger Being is transitive rather than substantial and is the appearing and cannot ever fully be revealed. Davey views this as a critical response to Neo-Platonic metaphysics and influenced by the Nietzschean destruction of metaphysics, which sees the experience of stability and identity as a projection by humans of a second world of Being separated from appearances, through which the latter are diminished to an uncertain becoming. According to Davey, from the Neo-Platonic tradition "[t]ranscendence has come to mean pass a limit, to rise above, pass over, surmount, or climb over" and he goes on to maintain that "[i]n their various

[24] Being for Heidegger refers to the formless presence that lies behind all individual beings. According to Heidegger, we tend to focus on things that appear as individual beings, such as a person, a chair, a tree, etc. and we tend to forget Being itself which is not one being or another but the formless presence behind them from which they dynamically emerge. Writing about this distinction in Heidegger's thought, Hadot remarks, "what is manifest are the beings that are present; what is hidden is the Presence that makes beings appear; what we completely forget is their surging-forth before us" (2006, 304). According to Heidegger, we have become forgetful of this presence of Being, and he encourages a greater awareness of it. Important to his conception is that Being can never be fully revealed, any revealing also involves a concealing. In Heidegger's account, Western philosophical thought has traditionally been understood as an experience of true Being as a presence, where, for example, Plato's Forms as Being are foundations for knowledge and truth. Davey (2010) considers whether the question of Being makes sense anymore once these foundations are brought into question and whether a notion of transcendence can still be retrieved. He maintains that Gadamer's hermeneutics shows that an anti-metaphysical stance can be reconciled with transcendent viewpoints and that this is achieved through the experience of language.

forms, these neoclassicist doctrines reinforce the ontological prejudice that the sensible and transient realm of the everyday is secondary" (2010, 31). Davey points to how the experience of language takes on the role of transcendence in Gadamer's thought, providing a this-worldly approach to transcendence.

Now, although we may debate the extent to which Gadamer follows Heidegger's and Nietzsche's deconstruction of metaphysics (and we will consider other interpretations of Gadamer later in this chapter), the situation that Davey has outlined presents a real challenge for the way that Hadot draws upon ancient conceptions of universality and hopes to apply them to a contemporary context. Indeed, the concerns with metaphysics that Davey outlines is representative of the type of Nietzschean-inspired viewpoints that influence Foucault's thought. Hadot's characterization of ancient philosophy as moving past bodily desires and the social world towards pure thought, even if we choose to try to back away from the discourses of metaphysical thought associated with it (e.g. universal reason), may still run afoul with criticisms of conceptions of objectivity that tend to discount the perspectival.[25] In this respect, rather than transcending ourselves via metaphysical structures or universal reason, for Gadamer something akin to this occurs through the experience of language and tradition; as Gadamer puts it, "[l]anguage is the language of reason itself" (2004, 402). For Gadamer, language and tradition serve as the mediums through which we may experience transcendence as an emergent phenomenon. Rather than this being an experience of a preformed universal that we must submit to or an understanding of our historical reality as a mere weak imitation of a more real second world, this is an experience of universality that is a creative and dynamic act that finds value in its presentations that arise (for example, interpretations of texts, insights that come about via conversation, artworks and interpretations of them) and emerge as intensifications of the everyday. Nevertheless, this isn't a call to relativism and our interpretation of the world isn't just creation of the self as per Foucault, but rather is an experience of truth. This is because for Gadamer our interpretations and experiences of understanding should follow the subject matter, so that rather than merely following our whim or habitual viewpoints, what takes place is an experience

[25] This will be considered further in Chapter 3.

of truth which changes us. For Gadamer the experience of self-understanding and truth is one which has both perspectival and universal aspects.

Despite Gadamer's emphasis on human finitude, language, and tradition, he draws upon a battery of metaphysical conceptions in ways that tend to draw him far closer to the Western metaphysical tradition than Heidegger. For example, as will be discussed further below and in later chapters, he draws upon a Neo-Platonic conception of emanation, is strongly influenced by Hegel, the metaphysics of light and Plato's conception of the beautiful and the Good. In contrast to Heidegger who sought to overcome metaphysics and who saw the history of Western thought as a forgetfulness of being, Gadamer points to the possibility of retrieving aspects of the metaphysical tradition to be thought anew. Viewpoints such as these create strong tensions in respect to reconciling the more Heideggerian aspects of Gadamer's thought with the more metaphysically inspired thinkers he draws upon. There are tensions and challenges to doing this, and when one considers the important influences of Hegel, Plato, Aristotle, and Heidegger on Gadamer, this truly creates dilemmas of interpretation. Robert Dostal characterizes the puzzle that await the interpreter of Gadamer as follows:

> Gadamer champions contemporary poetry, art, and music. Yet against most contemporary literary and art theory, Gadamer insists that these forms of art, often abstract and nonrepresentational, be understood as mimetic and as modes of the experience of truth. Gadamer embraces Aristotle's account of human action and good judgment, *phronesis*, and puts it to work in his philosophical hermeneutics. Thus he seems, in some important sense, to be an Aristotelian, yet he professes his loyalty to Plato. In addition, Gadamer's hermeneutics has as first principles situatedness, historicity and human temporality, finitude and the priority of praxis. Yet he attempts to develop an ontology that relies much on a reading of Plato. (2010, 46)

This creates challenges interpreting Gadamer as the tensions between the thinkers he draws upon and between perspectives of finitude and infinity in his thought are intense. This, indeed, is reflected in the breadth and divergence of the ways in which Gadamer has been interpreted. For example, Davey maintains that "[p]hilosophical hermeneutics is an antimetaphysical philosophy" (2006, xiii) and Richard Palmer positions Gadamer as "following Heidegger, is postmodern, post-subjectivist, post-humanist, ontological" (2010, 129). In contrast, Santiago Zabala maintains that a difference between Heidegger and Gadamer comes "from Gadamer's

inherent metaphysical search for truth through dialogue" (2010, 171). Brice Wachterhauser (2002) links Gadamer to metaphysical perspectives and realism to explain his notion of truth, realism here meaning that there is a form of correspondence and link between language and the outer world. Wachterhauser notes that "[o]ur beliefs are answerable to the world, even though they are formed through 'interpretation'" (2002, 77), which does not point to a supra-linguistic perspective outside of language but rather implies that Gadamer's account of interpretation "is not necessarily a projection of a 'human, all too human' perspective, but a finite participation in an intelligible world where intelligibility and meaning 'go all the way down'" (2002, 77). Jean Grondin maintains that Gadamer "alludes, albeit very discretely, to the *metaphysical* nature of his own undertaking" (2010, 200). Although Grondin acknowledges that "[t]o be sure, this 'metaphysics' remained 'somewhat muted' in *Truth and Method* in 1960," he nonetheless contends that there is a "metaphysical" aspect to Gadamer's thought. He conceives this as a "'metaphysics' that is immanent […] in our language and our understanding of the world: it is Being that we can understand. This Being that we understand thanks to language is also meaningful to the core. Metaphysical insights can be developed out of this hermeneutics of Being" (2010, 200). Gadamer has also been read in more pragmatic directions by, for example, Lauren Barthold and Richard Bernstein. He has also been criticized as being too relativistic by thinkers such as E. D. Hirsch and Jürgen Habermas, the latter of whom expressed concern that Gadamer's thought was too conservative and placed too strong an emphasis on authority. In addition, Gadamer has been criticized for being too essentialistic and foundationalist and not appreciating difference sufficiently by John Caputo, Jacques Derrida, and others. Again, this speaks to the range of interpretation to which Gadamer's thought has given rise, where some see his thought as too relativistic and others as too universalistic.

How we negotiate the tension inherent in Gadamer's ambiguous account of truth and how he both draws upon metaphysical perspectives from the tradition of Western thought and notions of temporality and finitude is crucial to the attempt of understanding his thought. For example, Dostal notes the proximity of Greek theory and the experience of art for Gadamer, and he explains that "Gadamer does not accept what he calls the Greek metaphysical view of theory under which nous is purely present to what is truly real" (2010, 59). For example, if we consider Plato, an experience of

theoria involves the sight of true Being, and, although Gadamer is inspired by Greek conceptions of *theoria*, he backs away from the metaphysical aspects of this experience.[26] In this respect, Dostal points to how aesthetic experience and *theoria* relate to truth for Gadamer and how Heidegger's conception of concealing and revealing is important to Gadamer's viewpoint. In contrast to a Platonic understanding of a pure experience of *nous*, where from such a viewpoint our human finitude would be "left behind," Dostal claims that for Gadamer:

> What the human state has in its stead is anamnesis, an experience that is to be awakened by conversation, by logos. There is no way for us humans, as the finite beings that we are, to adopt the purely noetic way, and thus in the *Phaedo* Socrates points to the second-best way—the way of logos. Here […] we find the connection for Gadamer between anamnesis and dialectic and dialogue. Only in conversation, ultimately aporetic, do we come to recognize the truth in a limited way. (2010, 59)

Anamnesis means remembering, and on Plato's account of this term as traditionally understood, it is a remembering of metaphysical Forms (see the *Meno*, for example). In Gadamer's account, rather than remembering being the experience of pure or *noetic* thought, he conceives the experience of the *logos* through language and tradition. Dostal notes that Gadamer's interpretation of Plato (and Aristotle) are via a temporal and phenomenological viewpoint and that Gadamer's considerations of permanence should be seen in this light (2010, 59).[27] I would agree with this assessment, and the challenge as I see it is how Gadamer's draws upon thinkers such as Plato, Aristotle and Hegel and prioritizes experiences of beauty, order and harmony generally found within classical metaphysical perspectives yet incorporates these viewpoints into his hermeneutic perspective that insists on human finitude and the ubiquity of linguistic experience. These tensions will be considered further below and in subsequent chapters.

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[26] We will explore *theoria* and Gadamer's conception of it in Chapter 6.

[27] In his conception of recognition Gadamer points to moving past the contingent to the permanent and we also find a sort of relative 'permanence' in his conception of eminent texts as texts which become classics within a tradition. For Gadamer, *Anamnesis* or remembrance relates to the resources that may be found in language and tradition and which we may creatively give expression to. I will consider Gadamer's conception of recognition and eminent texts further in later chapters.

Emerson's Transcendentalism

The contemporary reader of Emerson also has a large menu of interpretive options to choose from. From revisionary readings that emphasize a thinker of flux and movement (e.g. Branka Arsić), to being read as a secular thinker (e.g. George Kateb), a thinker with of strong influence on and affinity to Nietzsche (e.g. George Stack), a philosopher of language (e.g. Stanley Cavell, David Greenham) to what may be seen as more traditional readings that place stronger emphasis on the spiritual and metaphysical aspects to this thought (e.g. Joseph Urbas, Alan Levine, Daniel Malachuk), we find diverse interpretations of the man known as the "Sage of Concord". Exacerbating this wide range of viewpoints is that Emerson was not a systematic thinker and his main mediums of the lecture and essay, each with a specific focus, naturally lead to different perspectives that may contrast with those found in other places. In light of this, I will start my characterization of Emerson with what I think could be seen as a 'traditional' reading of him.

For Emerson's thought and transcendentalism more generally, there is an emphasis on a spiritual reality in contrast to following the dictates of society and custom. On the one hand, Emerson's transcendentalism has affinities with the metaphysical tradition that Heidegger's hermeneutics of facticity is reacting against. I will turn to a passage from Henry David Thoreau's *Walden* to help make this clear. Thoreau writes:

> Time is but the stream I go a-fishing in. I drink at it; but while I drink I see the sandy bottom and detect how shallow it is. Its thin current slides away, but eternity remains. I would drink deeper; fish in the sky, whose bottom is pebbly with stars. (2004, 187)

With this image of time being but a small aspect of reality versus eternity, transcendent truth provides a measure through which we may be oriented ourselves. Emerson writes in the chapter "Illusions" in *The Conduct of Life* (1860) that "[t]here is the illusion of time, which is very deep" and later remarks that "[t]he intellect sees that every atom carries the whole of Nature; that the mind opens to omnipotence" (1983, 1120), which points to the possibility, albeit usually fleeting, of transcendent experience. Transcendent experience is something that can help us move beyond the shallow forms of human tradition, customs, and superficial forms of human life. Roderick Nash explains:

> Transcendentalists had a definite conception of man's place in the universe divided between object and essence. His physical existence rooted him to the material portion, like all natural objects, but his soul gave him the potential to *transcend* this condition. Using intuition or imagination (as distinct from rational understanding), man might penetrate to spiritual truths. In the same manner he could discover his own correspondence with the divine being and appreciate his capacity for moral improvement. (1982, 85)

For Emerson, encouraging such experience is a practical task and many of his key terms such as "Over-Soul," "Intellect," "One," reflect this and what he understands as "Genius" and "Reason" are ways of tapping into the eternal. This brings us back to the hermeneutics of facticity and the importance for an understanding of time and our historicity positively; that is, rather than our historical existence being seen as a diminution in contrast to true Being, time and our historical situatedness are ontological opportunities full of possibility. For Gadamer, we experience transcendence as an expansion of our horizons within our historical world when we interact with our greater horizon of language and tradition, and this an ontological event that we do not consciously control. This event of understanding can change us; as Gadamer writes, "tradition asserts its own truth in being understood, and disturbs the horizon that had, until then, surrounded us" (2004, 480). For Emerson, the experience of intensified spiritual insight, which is often associated with the eternal, serves much the same role. However, given this difference between the eternal and temporal, we may think that we have a strong parting of the ways between Gadamer and Emerson's transcendentalism. However, in places Emerson points to an interconnection between the eternal and the temporal. For example, Emerson indicates that there is a different experience of time within moments of insight in his 1870 essay "Works and Days" from *Society and Solitude*:

> We ask for long life, but 'tis deep life, or grand moments, that signify. Let the measure of time be spiritual, not mechanical. Life is unnecessarily long. Moments of insight, of fine personal relation, a smile, a glance,—what ample borrowers of eternity they are. Life culminates and concentrates; and Homer said, "The gods ever give to mortals their apportioned share of reason only on one day". (*CW7*, 90)

Here Emerson is relating glimpses and brief moments with eternity, somewhat collapsing the distinction between the transitory and the eternal. Emerson's (and Thoreau's) orientation is to foster experience of the eternal

is in the here and now, and for Emerson, as he writes in *Nature* (1936), "[t]he invariable mark of wisdom is to see the miraculous is in the common" (1983, 47) and the goal is to bring a richer spirituality to the everyday. Further it should be noted that Gadamer also seems to seek to consider something akin to the eternal when he writes of one of his aesthetic conceptions, "tarrying," explaining that it is the closest we as finite beings can get to eternity (Gadamer, 1986b). This can be seen as both a nod to our facticity within time and as a reference to a heightened aesthetic experience that is similar to what traditionally is couched within the language of the eternal. In this respect, heightened aesthetic experience and metaphysical experience run close, and Gadamer explicitly points to how aesthetics has taken on the role of metaphysics in contemporary thought.

It should also be noted that although the experience of time was crucial to Heidegger's thought[28] and in this he influenced Gadamer, Heidegger sought to overcome dichotomies such as finite versus infinite and Being versus nothingness and promote a more authentic and profound experience of our possibilities as finite beings in relation to Being. So, in this respect, although human finitude is emphasized in Heidegger's thought, he attempts to deconstruct and re-conceptualize much of the ground covered by considerations of the infinite in Western philosophical thought.[29] Rod Coltman characterizes Gadamer's approach as follows: "[O]ne could see Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics as an attempt to reinterpret the history of metaphysics in a way that allows its own language to speak in

[28] Heidegger formulates the purpose of *Being and Time* as follows: "The aim of the following treatise is to work out the question of the meaning of *'being'* [*'Sein'*] and to do so concretely. The provisional aim is the interpretation of *time* as the possible horizon for any understanding whatsoever of being" (2010a, xxix).

[29] Coltman characterizes Heidegger's thought in the following way: "One could argue, as I will, that Heidegger's project of overcoming the history of metaphysics constitutes an effort to displace the infinite teleology of knowledge to which metaphysic aspires with a radically finite 'topological' approach to the question of being" (1998, 2). Whereas metaphysical approaches would base such truths upon teleology and metaphysical structures and presences, for Heidegger such truth is concealed and revealed as a finite and dynamic event within time. Nevertheless, Coltman maintains (and he points out that he is not alone in this) that "Heidegger's own most radical philosophical movement into poetizing/thinking never quite gains a foothold outside of the very metaphysical and specifically dialectical ground that it seeks to deconstruct" (1998, 6). In this respect, even if Heidegger is criticizing this tradition, his thought still arguably has some affinities to it. Be that as it may, this connection is far closer with Gadamer.

nonteleological, nonmetaphysical terms, from out of which he calls 'the middle of language'" (1998, 2). This creates tensions in respect to postmodernity, and Coltman points to the boldness of such an endeavor and the challenges of "how Gadamer can hope to negotiate such radical retrieval without falling prey to the very metaphysical naiveté that he confronts" (1998, xii). Coltman points to the value of Gadamer's attempt to "[recover] a new mode of philosophizing" (1998, xii) whether or not he actually succeeds in this endeavor. From these characterizations, we see both an affinity to these metaphysical conceptions and a distancing from them.

There are teleological aspects and metaphysical aspects to Emerson's thought. However, this should not be seen as a type of abstract system for him as it is to be related to our everyday experience and can transform us. In his 1837 lecture "The American Scholar" Emerson remarks: "I embrace the common, I explore and sit at the feet of the familiar, the low. […] show me the sublime presence of the highest spiritual cause lurking, as always its does lurk, in these suburbs and extremities of nature" (1983, 68-69). In this respect, for Emerson, there is a focus on the here and now within which the transcendent can be realized and such transcendence is an immanent transcendence in respect to ourselves, nature, and experiences of unity that may surpass the dualism of conceiving nature as something outside of and separate from us. That is, richer experience is available to us in the here and now if we are open to it. Emerson points to the need to move past conceptions of rigid metaphysical structures towards a direct experience of the world:

> Metaphysics is dangerous as a single pursuit. We should feel more confidence in the same results from the mouth of a man of the world. The inward analysis must be corrected by rough experience. Metaphysics must be perpetually reinforced by life; must be the observations of a working man on working men; must be biography,—the record of some law whose working was surprised by the observer in natural action.
>
> I think metaphysics a grammar to which, once read, we seldom return (*W12*, 13)

Here Emerson is pointing to how metaphysical structures may be problematic if pursued on their own as rigid structures that are not related to experience. Emerson goes on to note that "[m]y metaphysics are to the end of use" (*W12*, 13), again pointing to the lived emphasis of his approach in the here and now. Although Emerson to some extent draws on traditional

metaphysical conceptions, he makes them more mobile and fluxional, and generally relates them to human infinitude and potential. In this respect, it is noteworthy that Gadamer points to how his own hermeneutics and writings such as *The Idea of the Good in Platonic-Aristotelian Philosophy* and *Truth and Method* are a way of withstanding Heidegger's account of Plato's thought as initiating a forgetfulness of being, i.e. a way of "keep[ing] alive both Platonic dialogue and the speculative dimension common to Plato, Aristotle, and Hegel, as partners in the ongoing discussion which is philosophy" (Gadamer 1986c, 5). The way he generally does this is by emphasizing the concrete and fluid aspects of their thought and how the experience of understanding and truth is an emergent ontological phenomenon that occurs within language through following the subject matter of conversation or aesthetic insight. In general outline, in my view Emerson's thought follows this same pattern of flux and mobility, but still maintains aspects of teleology and metaphysics to support his conceptions of truth, interconnection, harmony and moral order. Gadamer on the other hand maintains similar notions of beauty, order and harmony, but draws back away from the teleology and metaphysics that traditionally supports such viewpoints within Western philosophical thought. For Gadamer experiences of a greater whole occur through the speculative experience of language as a dynamic ontological event. Put quite simply, there is an affinity between Emerson and Gadamer's thought in the way that they both emphasize and prioritize experiences of harmony and holism, but they justify their viewpoints differently.

The influence of romanticism and German idealism is another area of common ground for Gadamer and Emerson. These movements are well known influences on Emerson, and John Arthos writes in respect to Gadamer:

> Gadamer's poetics [Arthos' term for Gadamer's aesthetics] is both radical and conservative. It is remarkable the degree to which the salience of certain questions among the early Romantics have persisted among German thinkers, not least of which was what Schlegel described as the "feeling that we are at the same time finite and infinite." Gadamer continues in this current of metaphysical longing that was nurtured by the most sublime of musical, artistic, and literary traditions, and is tied somehow still to the potent mysticism of its origins. His encounter with the Nietzschean strains of modernity and postmodernity were muted by this deeper relation, so his poetics has a distinctive caste that lives within its own cultural limits and possibilities. (2014, 36)

There is a tension in Gadamer's thought between his emphasis on human finitude and what could be viewed as the resonance of the infinite that runs through his thought that he derives from the metaphysical thinkers that he both draws upon and distances himself from. In this sense, although Emerson's orientation towards the infinite is more pronounced than Gadamer's, this is a significant common element in their thought.

Gadamer works to articulate this experience of the infinite and the whole through experiences of human finitude and our experiences of language and tradition. In contrast, Emerson generally rails against custom, and although for him our tradition may play a role to inspire us, far more important for Emerson was original experience of nature and one's own spiritual depths. However, this is not some form of otherworldly contemplation for Emerson, but rather it is through our tangible experiences in life and of nature we can be brought into touch with ourselves. For Emerson, rather than falling into the sham of custom and habitual ways of being, we can move past or through these towards truer and more authentic experiences. The point of this is not to fly away from the everyday, but to reorient and infuse our everyday living with a more authentic and spiritual existence, one in which we tap into our immanent possibilities and ideals and bring them into reality.

Emerson does not expect a form of perfect insight that is done once and for all. For example, in his 1844 essay "Experience," he develops a conception of the different moods through which we experience reality.[30] As Emerson writes: "Life is a train of moods like a string of beads, and, as we pass through them, they prove to be many-colored lenses which paint the world their own hue, and each shows only which lies in its focus" (1983, 473). This arguably has affinities both with Heidegger's conception of moods as developed in *Being and Time* and also with Gadamer's understanding of prejudices as enabling points of view for experience. Nevertheless, Emerson also remarks: "If I have described life as a flux of moods, I must now add, that there is that in us which changes not, and which ranks all sensations and states of mind" (1983, 485). However, Emerson does not expect a full revealing of truth, and for all of Emerson's idealism he was also pragmatic and aware of his own limits. Emerson is a thinker of sudden

[30] See Cavell (2003) who considers Emerson's understanding of moods, what he calls Emerson's "epistemology of moods".

epiphanies that we may integrate into ourselves and grow from, but he is also well aware of our propensities to backslide and the difficulty of maintaining such perspectives. In this respect, although Emerson famously points to the "infinitude of the private man," (*JMN7,* 342) this is something that must continuously be worked towards as a process of self-realization that will never be complete.

Nevertheless, Emerson blurs the distinction between the human and the divine and his point is to mobilize our own creative potential. In this respect, what I believe Emerson tends to generally learn from limitation, failure and suffering is not, as per Gadamer, an admission of human finitude, but rather he encourages us to tap into our potential power as creators to transcend our limitations and improve ourselves to lead more fulfilling lives. For both Emerson and Gadamer, there is a practical process of transcendence which is a transformative experience of truth, but they have different theoretical explanations (e.g. the Over-Soul, Intellect and One for Emerson versus tradition/language for Gadamer) and a different understanding of how robust this experience can be. As we may expect, for Emerson, this is generally stronger. We will never be gods for Gadamer, but nevertheless the strong notions of truth and transcendence that he holds, particularly as found in his aesthetics, point to poetry and the artwork taking on what could be seen as a type 'quasi-divine' role in his thought as media for bringing out the unsaid and invisible creative potential that emerges within our experience of language as finite beings.[31]

Something that Emerson, Gadamer, and Heidegger have in common is that they all point towards a need for a more authentic and meaningful life, which involves critiques of scientism, capitalism, and materialism, or some combination of the above with varying emphases in each thinker. For Heidegger, we are lost within 'the they' (*das Man*) and idle talk and should work towards a more authentic and poetic way of being, and Emerson's concern with conformity is an attempt to detach from what he sees as limiting patterns of thought and behavior to reconnect to a deeper the sense of ourselves and of the Divine through self-reliance and a more aesthetic and

[31] For Gadamer there is also a connection between aesthetics and the domain traditionally covered by religious experience, as indicated by his remark that when "art proper was detached from the sphere of technical facility," which he characterizes as an emancipation, "it came to acquire the quasi-religious function that it possesses for us now, both in theory and practice" (1986b, 15).

poetic existence. Here we can point to the significant influence Emerson had on Nietzsche and how some of this filtered through to Heidegger. Nietzsche was an avid reader of Emerson and was strongly influenced by him. Despite this fact, Cavell notes that Emerson's influence on Nietzsche "no matter how obvious to anyone who cares to verify it […] stays incredible, […] is always in a forgotten state" (2003, 148). However, David Mikics (2003) makes the case that Emerson and Schopenhauer were Nietzsche's two most important influences in equal measure; and George Stack writes:

> Previously one heard that there is a parallel between Emerson's philosophy of self-reliant individuality and the existential philosophical movement in Europe. Emerson does not merely occupy the same intellectual and psychological space as the European existentialists; rather, his surprisingly radical thought entered directly into the bloodstream of this philosophical movement by way of Nietzsche. (1992, vii)

Although it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to attempt to explore the exact nature of this influence or evaluate how much of Emerson's thought may have filtered through to Gadamer, his influence clearly would have to some extent.[32] In this respect, although Gadamer is a thinker that emphasizes agreement and community, such a focus on mutual respect seemingly implies a heightened perspective beyond what is often the 'norm'. Gadamer provides what could be characterized as idealistic norms of greater openness, respect for and recognition of and interconnection to the other and, given the emphasis on finitude that Gadamer highlights, he is a thinker that comes up with surprisingly robust notions of truth at times. For example, at the end of *Truth and Method*, he characterizes his hermeneutic approach as a

[32] For example, Gregg Lambert writes in respect to Emerson's influence on Deleuze: "If we are to regard this tradition of philosophy that is remarked by the characteristics of outside thought as a river, according to the most common metaphor, then Emerson would simply be determined as that point in the river that is farthest upstream. Just as it makes little sense to examine the water downstream to determine how many parts originate from a point closest to the source, or which parts enter the river from points farther down, it would make just as little sense to try and measure how much of Nietzsche's influence on the philosophy of Deleuze would contain a little Emerson in it as well. I will simply proceed with the answer 'some,' for the sense of this metaphor gives us to understand that all parts of the river must flow together at some point" (2010, 238). In respect to the amount of influence of Emerson on Gadamer, I too will be content with "some".

"a discipline of questioning and inquiring, a discipline that guarantees truth" (2004, 484). This points to the ambiguity and tension between finitude and infinitude found within his thought, and I am suggesting that it is important to acknowledge the role of the latter, which for the purposes of our comparison would draw him closer to Emerson.

As we have pointed to above, language is crucial to Gadamer's hermeneutic perspective. In this respect, with the focus on the ordinary and lived aspect of Emerson's thought, Stanley Cavell has interpreted him in relation to ordinary language philosophy and David Greenham has further developed a linguistic reading of Emerson. An advantage of a linguistic reading of Emerson is that, like in Gadamer's hermeneutic thought, this facilitates an incorporation of transcendence within the auspices of language and thus seemingly avoids metaphysical viewpoints that may be problematic within a contemporary context. From a linguistic perspective, it is the way that we use language that either restricts or rather opens up stronger possibilities for experience. More poetic and innovative uses of language can help re-orient experience within the medium of language rather than being grounded in, for example, metaphysical structures. Of course, generally speaking, a linguistic reading of Emerson would bring him closer to Gadamer's viewpoint. The role of language within Emerson's thought will be considered in later chapters.

Conclusion

In summary and conclusion, Hadot points to the importance philosophy as a way of life through his exploration of ancient thought, within which spiritual exercises play an important role. Both Hadot and Foucault explore similar visions of the practical aspects of ancient philosophy and how this is relevant in a contemporary context but differ in respect to Hadot's emphasis on reason and universality and Foucault's emphasis on the fragmentary, particular and self-creative. Hadot and Cooper both point to the importance of philosophy as a way of life in ancient thought. Cooper emphasizes the rational nature of this endeavor, whereas Hadot, also he certainly has an important role for reason, has a broader conception of what philosophy was in ancient times and is in the present-day and his conception of spiritual exercises reflects this. This broader conception of philosophy has strong affinities with Gadamer's and Emerson's viewpoints and will be adopted in

the following chapters. Gadamer and Emerson, as two thinkers who both point to the importance of the universal and the particular, will be drawn upon in later chapters to help inform an understanding of transcendence in a contemporary context that may help supersede the seeming dichotomy between Hadot's and Foucault's perspectives. Philosophical practices will be drawn from Gadamer's and Emerson's thought in our consideration of philosophy as a way of life in a contemporary context.

Chapter 2 - Know Thyself and the Other

As we discussed in Chapter 1, Hadot points to a variety of practical exercises in ancient thought, one of which was the practice of dialogue. In this chapter, we will briefly explore Hadot's understanding of dialogue as a spiritual practice and relate this to Gadamer and Emerson.

Hadot points to the likelihood that spiritual exercises were found within the Western tradition since time immemorial but notes that it is with Socrates that it arose as a call to awaken moral consciousness through dialogue (1995, 89). For Hadot, dialogue is one important avenue of philosophical practice and he explains how Socrates starts from his position of ignorance in Socratic dialogue and helps the interlocutors attend to the importance of taking care of themselves, examining their conscience and achieving an inner progress, a process that relates to what they are rather than what they have. Hadot describes Socratic dialogue as a type of "communal spiritual exercise. In it the interlocutors are invited to participate in such inner spiritual exercises as examination of conscience and attention to oneself; in other words, they are urged to comply with the famous dictum, 'Know Thyself'" (1995, 90). Hadot also remarks that Socrates was proficient at inner dialogue and points out that "[m]editation – the practice of dialogue with oneself" (1995, 91) was important among his disciples. Hadot writes:

> The intimate connection between dialogue with others and dialogue with oneself is profoundly significant. Only he who is capable of a genuine encounter with the other is capable of an authentic encounter with himself, and the converse is equally true. Dialogue can be genuine only within the framework of presence to others and to oneself. From this perspective, every spiritual exercise is a dialogue, insofar as it is an exercise of authentic presence, to oneself and to others. (1995, 91)

Here we can see the important connection between the ability to authentically dialogue with oneself and with others and how these two experiences are connected. For Hadot, the point of Socratic and Platonic dialogue as well as every spiritual exercise is that we must allow ourselves to be changed, and we must dialogue with ourselves and battle with ourselves. Thus, dialogue is a practical exercise of potential self-transformation, and he

points to how dialectic "demands the explicit consent of the interlocutor at every moment" (1995, 92). Interlocutors must stay on the path of the dialectic so that contradictions in each position may be revealed in order to allow for new and unexpected conclusions.[33] According to Hadot, what is important is not the particular solutions that may arise in the course of dialogue, but that one stays on the path of thought and applies the dialogical method. He mentions two reasons for this, that a dialogue guides the interlocutor towards a conversion and that the interlocutor desires the Good and "agrees to submit to the rational demands of the Logos" (1995, 93). As we shall see, for Gadamer and Emerson there too is a type of conversion away from one's habitual ways of being and a transition towards more universality. I will draw special attention to dialogue with others and with oneself as we move on to discuss Gadamer and Emerson. I will explore how Gadamer generally focuses on dialogue with others, whereas Emerson places greater emphasis on dialogue with oneself, as will be considered through his notion of self-reliance. However, this distinction should be seen as more of a nuance or emphasis along a spectrum rather than a straight-forward dichotomy, as Gadamer certainly considers the importance of dialogue with oneself and Emerson the importance of dialogue with others. However, as will be seen, Gadamer places a much stronger emphasis on openness to others and following the subject matter to foster revising one's conceptions, whereas Emerson places far more emphasis on needing to trust oneself in this process.

Gadamer - *Bildung* and Conversation: Dialoguing with Others

Much of the emphasis in Gadamer's thought revolves around moving away from rigid viewpoints towards more open, fluid and relational perspectives. This section will briefly consider Gadamer's conception of *Bildung* and go on to explore his conception of dialogue and conversation and how they may contain practices that can be seen as part of a hermeneutic practice and as a way of life.

When Gadamer describes *Bildung* in *Truth and Method*, he does so by drawing on numerous instances from the historical tradition. He points to

[33] As we shall see, this is a crucial aspect of Gadamer's approach to conversation and dialogue.

how J. G. Herder more than anyone else helped transcend the enlightenment perspectives of perfectionism with his conception of "'cultivating the human' (Bildung)," which is "[t]he *concept of self-formation, education, or cultivation* (Bildung)" (2004, 8). *Bildung* does not have goals outside of its own activity and is a process through which humanity may raise itself up through culture. *Bildung* is not governed by purposefulness with specific goals *per se*, and Gadamer distinguishes between how cultivating talent is directed towards a specific end, whereas "Bildung, by contrast, [is] that by which and through which one is formed becomes completely one's own" (2004, 10). Gadamer points to how "[m]an is characterized by the break with the immediate and the natural that the intellectual, rational side of his nature demands of him" (2004, 11). Here he is drawing upon Hegel and points to the need to rise towards the universal which is not only a theoretical but also a practical task and entails a passage from immediate interest and desire towards more universal viewpoints. Given how we saw in Chapter 1 that an important aspect of ancient thought was the effort to overcome desire and live according to reason, there is a certain affinity here. In Gadamer's view, *Bildung* is a process of self-recognition and transcendence through engaging tradition; as cited in Chapter 1, "[e]very single individual who raises himself out of his natural being to the spiritual finds in the language, customs and institution of his people a pre-given body of material which, as in learning to speak, he has to make his own" (2004, 13). Here we see an indication of the important role that tradition plays in Gadamer's thought to promote experiences of universality which are related back to our concrete situation.[34] Gadamer, drawing upon Hegel, explains that through *Bildung* one moves away from one's private purposes towards more universal perspectives, which, as Gadamer clarifies, "are not a fixed applicable yardstick, but are present to him only as the viewpoints of possible others" (2004, 15-16). Although Gadamer is pointing towards universality, this involves aspects of plurality, difference, and flexibility. This points towards the important role that openness plays to promote the process of moving from dogmatic and isolated conceptions and understanding towards more universal and flexible viewpoints. Although the context in which Gadamer discusses *Bildung* in *Truth and Method* is fairly specific in the sense that he is focusing on defending the humanities against what he sees as the excessive influence of

[34] The role of tradition in Gadamer's thought will be explored further in Chapter 3.

scientific perspectives, the themes we find introduced there such as the importance of tradition and self-cultivation point to a far broader role for *Bildung* in Gadamer's thought. Davey explains:

> Hermeneutic understanding involves the process of comprehending what a text or dialogue imparts and in addition the development of a practice, of a preparedness or skill in changing mental perspectives. The nurturing of such preparedness is an integral element within the refinement of a hermeneutic discipline. The formation of these virtues is what is meant in part by *Bildung*. Acquiring a mental openness and a flexibility of response toward the strange and unexpected is to have become *experienced* in the discipline. (2006, 37)

An important aspect of hermeneutic thought is to encourage an openness so that when we encounter what is different than us we are willing to be brought up short and change rather than attempting to rigidly hold onto our prevailing viewpoints. For Gadamer, all understanding is self-understanding, meaning that our acts of interpretation change us, and I suggest that this practical emphasis on self-transformation establishes a strong affinity with Hadot's conception of philosophy as a way of life. In respect to Gadamer, we could say that there is an attempt to foster a "conversion," to use Hadot's term,[35] from being closed to being open, as one moves from dogmatic positions to take to more open and fluid perspectives.[36] However, it should be noted that in the introduction to *Truth and Method*, Gadamer writes, "it is not my intention to make prescriptions for the sciences or the conduct of life, but to try to correct false thinking about what they are" (xxii), which seems to indicate a lesser scope of practical application. However, Gadamer's hermeneutics emphasizes practice, and, for example, Monica Vilhauer maintains that there is an ethical emphasis in his thought**.** In respect to the passage above, she writes

> we should not be misled into thinking Gadamer has no ethical concerns, or even that ethics is not central to his project. Rather, we need to be sensitive to the mode in which Gadamer thinks "the ethical." This is a mode that does not declare absolute ethical rules. It is a mode, rather, that is deeply Aristotelian in character and grounded in a description of the observed practices that promote and preserve human flourishing and those that hinder it. (2010, 116)

[35] See Chapter 1.

[36] For Hadot, in ancient thought universality is approached within the dogmatism of some school which seems to preclude the openness that is important for Gadamer.

Here Vilhauer indicates that although Gadamer does not present rigid ethical rules, he gives softer guidelines or norms towards ethics with a practical emphasis, and I think she is correct in this assessment. In this respect, if we consider how Gadamer presents *Bildung*, it is not about rigidly dictating rules for self-cultivation, but rather provides a practical orientation to promote more open and flexible viewpoints. More broadly considered, given the importance for Gadamer's hermeneutics of how self-understanding is an act that changes us, how aesthetic insights may spur transformation, and the emphasis in his later thought on practical philosophy, these all seems very suggestive as concrete applications of philosophy to a lived life, and so it would seem very reasonable to me to read Gadamer from the perspective of philosophy as a way of life. For example, Gadamer writes:

> The nature of hermeneutical reflection requires a constant return to the praxis of hermeneutic experience. Schleiermacher confessed quite candidly, "I hate all theory that does not grow out of practice." To me, this statement was an important confirmation of my own way of proceeding. (2007, 196-197)

The lived practice of hermeneutic self-understanding is a form of potential self-transformation and a way of life.

I will now turn to explore Gadamer's conception of the "I and Thou" relation, which Gadamer explores in respect to tradition, textual interpretation and people, although I will be focusing on an example of verbal conversation in this chapter.[37] Gadamer explains that there are three ways of approaching a Thou. The first way is a type of predictive approach where we understand a person similarly to any other object, seeking to predict behavior. Gadamer maintains that "[f]rom the moral point of view this orientation toward the Thou is purely self-regarding and contradicts the moral definition of man" (2004, 352). If we take this approach we cannot truly engage in dialogue and we are not open to the other, as we are caught

[37] Gadamer's moved past the use of I/Thou terminology towards using the term the Other (see Gadamer, 2000). See Vessey (2005) for a consideration of the limitations that Gadamer felt were inherent in I/Thou viewpoints. One of Gadamer's concerns of utilizing I/Thou terminology is that he felt it supports a view of intersubjectivity that emphasizes a relation between two individuals and may not recognize a deeper intersubjective unity, which for Gadamer exists through language (see Vessey 2005, 62-63, Gadamer 2000). In my view, once we recognize this concern and understand the importance for Gadamer of a greater whole beyond the individual, I/Thou terminology may still provide a helpful way of respectfully and openly orienting towards another person and the subject matter.

up in interpreting the other in terms of our own preconceptions and self-serving goals. Gadamer describes a second way of relating and explains that "the Thou is experienced and understood […] [and] acknowledged as a person, but despite this acknowledgment the understanding of the Thou is still a form of self-relatedness" (2004, 353). He gives an example of charity or welfare work and explains how from this point of view, one claims to know the Thou better then they know themselves and there isn't a true listening because there is a claim to know the other in advance. Although this is an improvement on the type one approach, this is still a failure, albeit a subtler one. Gadamer the describes a third way of experiencing a Thou:

> In human relations the important thing is, as we have seen, to experience the Thou truly as a Thou—i.e., not to overlook his claim but to let him really say something to us. Here is where openness belongs. But ultimately this openness does not exist only for the person who speaks; rather, anyone who listens is fundamentally open. Without such openness to one another there is no genuine human bond. (2004, 355)

Openness for Gadamer involves being able to acknowledge our own perspective of finitude to the extent that we recognize that we are governed by our prejudices and are willing to bring them into play; we are open to the other and to following the subject matter, which may lead to the emergence of new perspectives. Gadamer mentions that this approach of listening to one another is not slavish obedience but notes that "[o]penness to the other […] involves recognizing that I myself must accept some things that are against me, even though no one else forces me to do so" (2004, 355). This points back to the importance of cultivating the willingness to bring our own viewpoints into question.

To help orient the reader, I have put Gadamer's three types of I/Thou relations into a table and provided a keyword or keywords for each:

Table 1: Gadamer – I/Thou relation

	Type One	**Type Two**	**Type Three**
Keywords	Manipulative	Knows Best	Respectful and Open
Description	Self-serving and manipulative	Think they know what is best for others	Truly open to and respects the other

Gadamer's "I and Thou" approach is intended to lead from habitual egotistic and limiting patterns towards more authentic and respectful dialogue, with the idea that we may learn to respect the other in openness rather than turning a relation towards our own ends (that is, put simply, we should work towards being less manipulative and more respectful). We must be open enough to be willing to ask questions, and the point in dialogue is not to win the argument, but to engage in questions and answers, where the conversation partners need to be with each other and both directed by the subject matter. This is an attitude of openness to the other and to changing one's own beliefs, so that by engaging the other in dialogue there is the potential to mutually expand each other's horizons. We will now turn to Gadamer's understanding of Socratic and Platonic dialogue and dialectic[38] and their influence on his hermeneutic approach and further consider how we may incorporate his I and Thou viewpoint as a practice to help facilitate genuine dialogue.

Socratic and Platonic dialogue

Gadamer emphasizes the importance of asking questions in his hermeneutic approach to openness and experience, for in order to have experiences that may change us, we have to be able to recognize differences between our previous understandings and the subject matter. For Gadamer, there is a recognition of our human limitation and finitude and he emphasizes the Socratic viewpoint of knowing that one does not know. He points to the need to be open to and interested in new possibilities, for in doing so, this is the first step taken towards learning to question. In this respect, Gadamer points out that if someone is dialoguing merely to prove themselves correct, it does seem that asking questions is easier than answering them, as they do not have

[38] In respect to the relation between the terms of dialogue and dialectic, Barthold explains that in the secondary literature related to Gadamer's thought it is not uncommon to use both terms interchangeably, as does Gadamer himself in places (2009, xvi). Barthold maintains that although dialogue and dialectic are "inextricable terms for Gadamer," there is "more to the latter than the former" (2009, xvii). She highlights three key difference between dialogue and dialectic: "1) its [dialectic] grounding in Socratic dialogue; 2) its productive and constant chorismatic tension, and 3) and its requirement of the dual role of the good (as both contributing to the solidarity of beings and as an assumption that lies beyond being)" (2009, xviii). We will consider the role of the good in Gadamer's thought in Chapter 6, but I will generally use the terms dialogue and dialectic interchangeably for the sake of simplicity.

to take on the risk that they may not be able to answer a question. Gadamer notes that the repeated failures of the interlocutors in Plato's dialogues "shows that people who think they know better cannot even ask the right questions" (2004, 356-357). Here, I think, it is fruitful to think back to the "I and Thou" distinction that Gadamer makes in the sense that approaching a conversation to prove that one is correct could be viewed as a form of type 1 'manipulation' and type 2 'knows better' viewpoint. In this respect, when Gadamer goes on to write that "[i]n order to be able to ask, one must want to know, and that means knowing that one does not know" (2004, 357), I think we can discern that a type 3 or 'respectful and open' way of approaching a Thou informs learning how to truly question and put one's own prejudices at risk in this process, which facilitates following the subject matter. This is important as "[d]iscourse that is intended to reveal something requires that that thing be broken open by the question" (2004, 357), and, as Gadamer remarks, "[f]or this reason, dialectic proceeds by way of question and answer or, rather, the path of all knowledge leads through the question. To ask a question means to bring into the open" (2004, 357). Gadamer points to a state of indeterminacy when a question becomes an open question, and, in the end, become a true question. This is a creative process of focusing on questions within certain limits and orientations that can lead to sudden ideas:

> The real nature of the sudden idea is perhaps less that a solution occurs to us like an answer to a riddle than that a question occurs to us that breaks through into the open and thereby makes an answer possible. Every sudden idea has the structure of a question. But the sudden occurrence of the question is already a breach in the smooth front of popular opinion. Hence we say that a question too "occurs" to us, that it "arises" or "presents itself" more than that we raise it or present it. (2004, 360)

According to Gadamer, when orienting oneself towards the question in a genuine way this helps breaks past collective opinion and opens up the possibility for a more genuine experience. Here we see the emphasis Gadamer places on this being something beyond our will or control, as an idea is a sudden emergence of a new insight that occurs after the previous effort of questioning. We can also see here why Gadamer places such importance on maintaining an attitude of openness, as "[t]he art of questioning is the art of questioning even further—i.e. the art of thinking. It is called dialectic because it is the art of conducting a real dialogue" (2004,

360). We need the openness to keep thinking further and following the subject matter. A real dialogue does not consist in each partner dogmatically defending their own judgments but rather remaining open to other viewpoints. Dialogical partners need to avoid working past each other, but rather to work with a common purpose and following the subject matter and considering the viewpoint of the other. This allows one to develop greater flexibility, "as against the fixity of opinions, questioning makes the object and all its possibilities fluid" (2004, 361) and "[d]ialectic consists not trying to discover the weakness of what is said, but in bringing out its real strength" (2004, 361). In other words, instead of arguing one should think things through and support objections by referring to the subject matter, a process of strengthening which Gadamer relates back to Plato. Gadamer points to Socrates' role as a midwife here and writes that "the immanent logic of the subject matter […] is unfolded in the dialogue. What merges in its truth is the logos, which is neither mine nor yours and hence so far transcends the interlocutors' subjective opinions that even the person leading the conversion knows that he does not know" (2004, 361). In this respect, it is the role of the subject matter, rather than Socrates as a virtuoso in dialectic who possesses knowledge, which leads towards truth. Chris Lawn writes of Gadamer's "radical rereading of early Socratic dialogue" (2006, 70), and notes that in the early dialogues Socrates is battling with the leading sophists of his time, and, "[u]sing the tricks of sophistry as much as his opponents he succeeds in silencing many of his interlocutors" (2006, 70). Lawn points to how Socrates has traditionally been understood as paradoxically disclosing the "fragility of truth and knowledge" (2006, 70) through defending absolute truth against the sophists through uncompromising logic which discloses the foibles of weak argumentation. He writes:

> Socrates, according to the standard reading, epitomizes the triumph of logical over bogus reasoning. Against this heroic account Gadamer offers another picture. Socrates speaks of himself as a midwife and this self-description fits in well with the Gadamerian interpretation. As midwife Socrates is not in possession of truth but is there at its birth. Like a midwife he is not the central figure but a facilitator. The real birth of truth is what happens in *genuine* dialogue. (2006, 70)

On a traditional reading,[39] we could say that Socrates does in fact 'know better' and is able to challenge the interlocutors in various directions, or even manipulate them (with the best of intentions) in order to facilitate the birth of truth. In Gadamer's account, it would seem that it is through questioning in a genuine way that Socrates is there as truth emerges. This is a process of following the subject matter whereby one is led away from personal dogmatisms towards more universal perspectives.

The importance of the subject matter itself as it is gathered together in discussion itself emerges is a point that Gadamer focuses upon in his book *Plato's Dialectical Ethics*,[40] and what I want to do now is briefly turn to this book of Gadamer's to consider the role of the dialogical leader that Gadamer finds in Plato's thought. In Gadamer's view, there is a continuity between Plato's earlier and later dialogues, even if there is a transition from the earlier dialogues where Socrates is a questioner towards someone who claims knowledge. When Gadamer writes that "Plato's Socrates increasingly gives up the attitude of the questioner and tester, and […] the discussion leader in later dialogues himself becomes the person who claims knowledge, still it is not without reason that the dialogue continues to be the form in which this knowledge is effected" (1991, 51), he acknowledges a more positive claim to

[39] However, it should be noted that many have argued for a "midwife" reading, which certainly influenced some of Plato's successors in the Academy (notably Arcesilaus). Academic skepticism takes its cue from Socrates (of the early dialogues and the *Theaetetus*, where the midwife imagery is emphasized). Gadamer's reading here is not that different from various contemporary interpreters, who emphasize "midwife" readings (see, e.g. Sedley, 2004).

[40] Given that Gadamer explores Plato in this and other books, we may wonder how perspectives being developed there or in his other works on ancient philosophy relate to his hermeneutics. In this respect, Paulette Kidder writes: "It is recognized not only that Gadamer's lifelong companionship with Greek philosophy has profoundly affected his thought, such that it is impossible to understand his 'original' contributions in separation form his scholarly interpretation. Indeed, that the two are inseparable is consistent with Gadamer's hermeneutical insight that every inquiry into an 'eminent text' of the past is guided by present concerns, and that every present concern is understood through a language formed in such eminent texts (1995, 83). According to Dostal: "[Gadamer's] attention to Plato was not a side interest unrelated to his hermeneutics. In fact, his concern for Plato is importantly related to his hermeneutics, for his hermeneutical theory is, at its heart, a recover of Greek philosophy, especially Plato, within a contemporary context" (2010, 45). These viewpoints indicate that Gadamer's interpretation of Plato and Greek philosophy should be taken seriously in respect to his hermeneutics more generally.

knowledge by Socrates, but emphasizes how such knowledge emerges through dialogue. Gadamer goes on to emphasize that the leader still questions himself when he continues:

> [I]t is the leader himself who continually subjects what he says to this testing and proves the claim to knowledge (which his speech contains) by coming to an understanding with others. The dialogue form allows him continually to make sure that the other person is with him in the process of opening up the facts of the matter and thus protects his own speech from falling (in a way that all talk in a rhetorically knowledgeable age is prone to do) into an empty speech that loses the seen object from view. (1991, 51-52)

Although Gadamer does not emphasize the hermeneutic thinker's role as a leader in *Truth and Method*, I would suggest that in a certain sense one may consider her to perform such a function, as the type of dialogue he is promoting is arguably not the 'norm' in the world at large. In this sense, the hermeneutic 'leader' is one who at least is open to the fact that she does not know and is willing to bring her prejudices into play and work with others towards a better understanding of the subject matter within conversation (rather than, for example, arguing and not listening to one another, and trying to manipulate the other into one's own point of view).[41] What this seems to lead to is a type of 'soft' leadership, where the person taking a hermeneutic perspective is more of a helper towards promoting dialogue and a greater emphasis is laid upon bringing one's own prejudices into play than clearing away the distortions of the other. Kathleen Wright explains in respect to interpreting tradition that for Gadamer the task of hermeneutics is not to "cross-examine the written tradition as Socrates does the opinions of his interlocutors," but rather we to are to assume "the role of an interlocutor in a Platonic dialogue. As a listening reader we allow ourselves to be cross-

[41] However, this shouldn't be taken to imply that the 'leader' directs the conversation. As Santiago Zabala writes, "a genuine *Gespräch* [conversation or dialogue] is never one we wanted to conduct but rather one we fall into as it develops. This is why we cannot decide to become involved in a conversation, assume a position of leadership with it, or extricate its truth but must instead wait for these functions to appear on their own; we are always led by the conversation" (2010, 172). The point I am making is that the hermeneutically inspired person is a 'leader' in the sense of being an example of taking the initiative to be open, respect their conversation partner, and follow the subject matter. It must be kept in mind that such 'leadership' must work against the tendency of falling into a self-complacent attitude of knowing better than the other.

examined by what is written and handed down to be understood" (1986, 201-202).[42] Whether we are considering our interpretation of tradition or engaged in a conversation, rather than attempting to justify one's own viewpoint by criticizing the other's viewpoint, in Gadamer's view we should cultivate the willingness to be open to and consider what is said, which again brings us back to our three relations to the Thou and the need to cultivate a type three or 'respectful' approach. For Gadamer, "questioning is not a technique of role playing. The questioner is always one who simultaneously questions himself" (1986c, 59), which again points the crucial emphasis on self-transformation for Gadamer. In this respect, Gadamer's approach to conversation can be seen as a contemporary approach to dialogue as a spiritual exercise, and I believe it could be argued that a preeminent hermeneutic practice is to work towards learning to open one's habitual viewpoints to revision and the ensuing self-transformation that may occur in this process. Here the three ways of relating to a Thou arguably provide a framework for mobilizing the ability to question and engage in genuine conversation, helping to promote moving past the type one 'manipulative' ways of relating and the assumptions of a type two attitude of 'knowing better' than others, in order to open up to the 'respectful and open' path of a type three way of relating to a Thou, which supports the cultivation of the ability to remain open to following the subject matter of conversation and the self-transformation that may ensue from this process and practice. As mentioned above, Hadot describes all philosophical exercises and dialogue as a battle with oneself, and for Gadamer, there is a specific effort to resist the tendencies of being a manipulative self-seeking know-it-all and rather cultivating a humbler and more respectful attitude of openness to the other.

We can see from the description of Hadot's understanding of Socratic and Platonic dialogue and dialectic as a spiritual exercise given at the start of the chapter with its emphasis on following the course of discussion and rationality that there are strong parallels between Hadot's and Gadamer's conception of dialogue and a movement towards objectivity. For Gadamer, the attempt at objective discourse is of course limited in respect to the interlocutor's prejudices, but these are brought into play by following the

[42] I think we could say that for Gadamer, if we were to try to take on Socrates role as traditionally understood as a leader and debunker of false viewpoints we would be inauthentically questioning and not opening ourselves up to self-transformation.

subject matter, which facilitates a movement in this direction. It should be kept in mind that Gadamer emphasizes the experience of dialogue as a playful process and that openness to different viewpoints and flexibility are important for Gadamer's conception. In this sense, the movement towards universality also includes plurality.[43] In an interview, Hadot points to dialogue as a spiritual exercise and notes that

> it consists precisely in recognizing the rights of the other in discussion, and especially in recognizing a superior norm to which the self must elevate itself in order simply to dialogue—a superior norm that is reason. It is basically simple: as soon as one attempt to subject oneself to reason, one is almost necessarily obliged to renounce egotism. (2011, 107)

This has strong affinities with Gadamer's approach but for Gadamer such reason works itself out through the dialogical process within language as "language is the language of reason itself" (2004, 402). This is a process, and "[e]very conversation presupposes a common language, or better, creates a common language" (2004, 371), which is worked out within the lived experience of dialogue. Seen in this way, language is not something that presents its self once and for all but changes through the lived process of ongoing dialogue, whereas for Hadot's ancients, there is change but it is towards a fixed and dogmatic end. This process of creating a common language has implications for self-understanding and self-transformation: "To reach an understanding in a dialogue is not merely a matter of putting oneself forward and successfully asserting one's own point of view, but being transformed into a communion in which we do not remain what we were" (2004, 371). This points to the opportunity and risk of openness, as we do not know beforehand which beliefs will be changed, and we can be surprised and "pulled up short" (2004, 270) and our provisional meanings re-defined with the possibility for expansion and enriched self-understanding. For Gadamer, this is an ongoing process and one that does not presuppose complete agreement and would require a never-ending dialogue which he also relates to "the inner dialogue the soul has with itself" (Gadamer 1989a, 57). Here we see that although Gadamer emphasizes outer dialogue with others, he also considers the importance of inner dialogue.

[43] And in this respect Gadamer differs from Hadot.

For Gadamer, working toward understanding and agreement, whether in dialogue with the other or with oneself is always on the way and works towards inclusiveness, a process that will never be total or complete. It should be kept in mind the importance of language for Gadamer; for example, he explains that "the way understanding occurs—whether it is the case of a text or a dialogue with another person who raises an issue with us—is the coming-into-language of the thing itself" (2004, 371). In this respect, the way that Gadamer draws upon language may be seen as a fluid and dynamic way of articulating the universality of reason in a contemporary context. This will be considered further in Chapter 8.

Emerson's Self-Reliance: Dialoguing with Oneself

A cornerstone of Emerson's thought is the idea that we must make the attempt to be authentic to ourselves, and this is evident in his conception of self-reliance with its emphasis on learning to look within for answers. In his 1841 essay "Self-Reliance," Emerson remarks that "[a] man should learn to detect and watch that gleam of light which flashes across his mind from within, more than the lustre of the firmament of bards and sages" (1983, 259). Here Emerson would seem to be emphasizing something akin to Hadot's perspective of a soul dialoguing with itself or inner dialogue. Implied in Emerson's conception of self-reliance is a strong rallying cry calling for individual integrity, creation and freedom and a turn away from the habits and patterns that limit us and following what others may impose on us, and accordingly, he claims that "[n]othing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind" (1983, 135). However, this is not a form of simple individualism in the traditional sense; rather, as we shall see, it involves a profound connection and transcendence towards a greater whole and the divine.[44]

In Emerson's view, the average person is not being authentic to themselves. Rather, such persons have sacrificed their integrity, and, to draw upon Thoreau's famous lines, "the mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation" (2004, 117). For Emerson and the transcendentalists more generally, society encourages an excessive materialism and shallow religions of conformity at the expense of authentic spiritual values. Against following

[44] See Lawrence Buell (2003) for some of the influences behind Emerson's notion of self-reliance.

what may be deemed worthy by society (custom), Emerson encourages one to look within to find one's meaning and calling. For Emerson, even when one looks to others for inspiration, this still reflects one's own potential; for example, he writes that "[i]n every work of genius we recognize our own rejected thoughts" (1983, 259). Despite the emphasis on the individual in Emerson's thought, there are also strong conceptions of interconnection and holism. Lawrence Buell notes that Emerson's conception of self-reliance is difficult to pin down and remarks that "[i]t seems founded on a self-contradiction: we are entitled to trust our deepest convictions of what is true and right insofar as every person's inmost identity is a transpersonal universal" (2003, 59). This is because in our depths we are part of an interconnected whole and we each have the opportunity for personal inspiration and revelation. There is a respect for the individual, where each person has the possibility of creative genius and a relation to the whole. There are tensions in this account, but as Buell points out, it is mistaken to think of self-reliance as a theory because it is intended "as a personal life practice" (2003, 63). In this respect, I would suggest that self-reliance is a primary Emersonian practice that has clear connections to the practical emphasis of philosophy as a way of life and the important role that transcendence plays in Hadot's account of ancient thought and more generally.

Emerson asks, "[w]hat is the aboriginal Self, on which a universal reliance may be grounded?" (1983, 268), and later replies:

> The inquiry leads us to that source, at once the essence of genius, of virtue, and of life, which we call Spontaneity or Instinct. We denote this primary wisdom as Intuition, whilst all later teachings are tuitions. In that deep force, the last fact behind which analysis cannot go, all things find their common origin. For the sense of being which in calm hours rises, we know not how, in the soul, is not diverse from things, from space, from light, from time, from man, but one with them, and proceeds obviously from the same source when their life and being also proceed. (1983, 269)

In this rich passage, we see an account of the importance for intuitive or receptive experience for Emerson, and its contrast with "tuition" or ordinary understanding. What intuitive experience consists of for Emerson will be considered further in later chapters. At this point, what matters is that it is an experience of truth that is fostered by an experience of our participation and interconnection with a greater whole. For Emerson, our own relation to our

deepest and most authentic recesses is something holy; as he remarks in his 1838 "Divinity School Address": "They [all people] think society wiser than their soul, and know not that one soul, and their soul, is wiser than the whole world" (1983, 88). Here we can see an important reminder that we can trust ourselves rather than the dictates of society.

One of the main obstacles towards being authentic to oneself and self-reliant is the tendency towards conformity, both in terms of following the expectations of others and our own habitual tendencies. In regard to the former, the preformed patterns and expectations of society tend to lead one away from oneself according to Emerson, and one needs to let go of holding this as an external authority. On Emerson's account, we need to trust ourselves instead.[45] As Cavell explains: "It is a matter of taking back to yourself an authority for yourself you have been compelled to invest elsewhere" (2003, 31). As Emerson puts it in "Self-Reliance":

> Society everywhere is in conspiracy against the manhood of every one of its members. Society is a joint-stock company, in which the members agree, for the better of securing of his bread to each shareholder, to surrender the liberty and culture of the eater. The virtue in most request is conformity. Self-reliance is its aversion. (1983, 261)

In contrast to this unthinking conformity, Emerson suggests a radical reappraisal of our values, writing "[w]hoso would be a man must be a nonconformist" (1983, 261), and makes the encouragement to "[t]rust thyself: every heart vibrates to that iron string" (1983, 260). For Emerson, one doesn't sacrifice one's own integrity to please or impress others (1983, 267). One does not apologize for oneself but rather recognizes one's own inherent worth, which can be seen as an attempt to encourage contact with one's strength that in Emerson's view everyone has. According to Emerson, a thoughtless consistency is problematic, be this conceived as following the expectations of others or society or also one's own habitual patterns. Instead of thoughtlessly following our past course, we should leave behind habitual patterns and theories and cultivate new perspectives and experiences. Emerson writes that "a foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds [...]. With consistency a great soul has simply nothing to do. He may as well

[45] It should be kept in mind that 'oneself' should be taken in the broadest sense of the term and incorporates strong notions of participation in a greater whole and transcendence.

concern himself with his shadow on the wall" (1983, 265). Rather than carrying our past behind us, a "corpse of your memory" (1983, 265), Emerson encourages where appropriate to contradict past perspectives and to be open for new points of view. This isn't to suggest that some consistency isn't valuable or necessary, but rather points towards encouraging more flexible and novel perspectives. This brings us back to Emerson's prioritization of spontaneous and intuitive experience and how if we hold onto habitual viewpoints this may restrict this. Emerson notes that when one follows oneself, others may not be pleased and he maintains that "[f]or nonconformity the world whips you with its displeasure. And therefore a man must know how to estimate a sour face" (1983, 264). This "right estimate" is basically learning not to allow a "sour face" or the opinion of someone else to dissuade us from following ourselves and we should cultivate the inner fortitude to follow ourselves. In this effort to refuse to follow the ordinary patterns and dictates of a life of conformity, we can see an affinity to the resistance to received modes of thought that Foucault promotes and the ancient philosophical understanding that a life according to philosophy may be very different from the life of non-philosophers. Hadot points to the different lifestyle that philosophy promoted in ancient thought in opposition to ordinary modes of life, which "explains the reaction of non-philosophers, which ranged from the mockery we find expressed in the comic poets, to the outright hostility which went so far as to cause the death of Socrates" (1995, 104). Whether in ancient or present-day times, when pursuing a philosophical way of life the philosopher may encounter opposition from others and the habitual patterns that one has taken on as a socialized being or developed on one's own that conflict with this. As such, there is a need to "do battle" to convert oneself to a philosophical way of life and self-reliance.

For Emerson, there is a certain paradox in that the self-reliant individual necessarily follows his own path, yet this involves tapping into experiences of universality. For example, he notes that "[w]e must go alone" (1983, 272), and exhorts his reader to "[i]nsist on yourself; never imitate" (1983, 278), and claims that "[e]very great man is unique" (1983, 279). Nevertheless, we should bear in mind that for Emerson inner intuitive experiences are ecstatic experiences of the whole beyond a sense of oneself as an isolated subject. Although one's access to this intensified experience is individual and unique, there is a sense of profound interconnection with all that is which may be

experienced in the here and now when we tap into it.[46] The deeper we move within, we are connected to a public and collective power which each of us can draw upon. For Emerson, there is compatibility between one's own individuality and the Divine, and one is being self-reliant by one's deep connection and receptivity to this public power. I think William James puts it well when he writes about Emerson: "Through the individual fact there ever shone for him the effulgence of the Universal Reason. The great Cosmic Intellect terminates and houses itself in mortal men and passing hours. Each of us is an angle of its eternal vision, and the only way to be true to our Maker is to be loyal to ourselves" (1962, 20). Emerson values the unique and individual experience and it is through this that one experiences the more universal and heightened senses of oneness. Said another way, through becoming self-reliant one taps into an immanent (yet normally transcendent) aspect of oneself, which connects us to more holistic perspectives. For Emerson, this is a dynamic and creative process, and when one is receptive to one's own intuition, these insights can lead towards self-transformation. Emerson writes in his 1841 essay "Circles" that "[t]he life of man is a self-evolving circle, which, from a ring imperceptibly small, rushes on all sides outwards to new and larger circles, and that without end" (1983, 404). This suggests a series of expansions where the self is redefined in a greater whole, where perspectives beyond the self are integrated into a new self, which is an ongoing process towards the divine.

Emerson points to several instances of what constitutes self-reliance and want of self-reliance. For Emerson, the self-reliant individual is the lawmaker for himself, and he notes in "Self-Reliance" that "[i]f any one imagines that this law is lax, let him keep its commandment one day" (1983, 274). This points to the strength needed for self-reliance. Emerson remarks that "[w]e are afraid of truth, afraid of fortune, afraid of death, and afraid of

[46] There has been as transition in recent Emerson scholarship from the traditional notion of a willful and powerful self-reliant individual to a recognition of the impersonal, fragile and fluxional self. For example, Barbara Packer (1982) points to the paradox between Emerson's emphasis on individuality and the abandonment to a greater whole, Sharon Cameron (2010) emphasizes the experience of the impersonal and abandonment in Emerson's thought and Arsić (2010) emphasizes the leaving of the self and the role of flux and impermanence in her interpretation of Emerson. Urbas questions recent readings of Emerson that discount his metaphysics and rather points to how self-reliance relates to the causal force of the soul (2016, 24-25).

each other" (1983, 274), and we need courage to overcome this fear and the fortitude to overcome failures that may occur. A more detached perspective should be taken, and, as Emerson puts it, "[l]et a Stoic open the resources of man, and tell men they are not leaning willows, but can and must detach themselves; that with the exercise of self-trust, new powers shall appear" (1983, 275).[47] One becomes self-reliant by following one's own path and not accepting the ready-made forms of society or one's close attachments: "I shun father and mother and wife and brother, when my genius calls me" (1983, 262). However, for Emerson, even when one goes into solitude this also brings one back to an experience of greater connectivity to others and the fruits of this can be brought back to help others; for example, in *Nature* (1836) he writes: "The poet, in utter solitude remembering his spontaneous thoughts and recording them, is found to have recorded that, which men in crowded cities find true for them also" (1983, 64). Emerson in his 1838 lecture "Literary Ethics" points to how we can draw inspiration from wherever we are, that we are not limited by our circumstances in this respect (1983, 105). Although specific circumstance may be sought out to help encourage solitude and inspiration, it is one's attitude that is most important in this respect and one should be able to achieve this anywhere. Elsewhere, in a journal entry from June 12, 1838, Emerson points to the value inherent in alternating between society and solitude: "Solitude is naught & society is naught. Alternate them & the good of each is seen," to which he adds "[u]ndulation, Alternation, is the condition of progress, of life" (1982, 187).

[47] Emerson's viewpoint would seem to find some commonality with how Hadot characterizes the independence cultivated by ancient philosophers: "Philosophy presented itself as a method for achieving independence and inner freedom (*autarkeia*), that state in which the ego depends only upon itself. We encounter this theme in Socrates, among the Cynics, in Aristotle—for whom only the contemplative life is independent – in Epicurus, and among the Stoics. Although their methodologies differ, we find in all philosophical schools the same awareness of the power of the human self to free itself from everything which is alien to it, even if, as in the case of the Skeptics, it does so via the mere refusal to make any decision" (1995, 266). Svavar Svavarsson (2015) points to how independence was an important aspect of ancient philosophical viewpoints of becoming godlike, as gods are independent. As we shall see in later chapters, Emerson's account of relying on oneself, although certainly inspired by Stoic conceptions and including notions derived from Stoicism such as accepting one's fate (and so one gains 'freedom' through such acceptance), places far greater emphasis on developing practical power so that freedom translates into creating a joyful life which involves shaping our experience of the world to reflect this.

The balance between solitude in nature and society is something ongoing, and in fact, ideally we may experience solitude in the company of others; as Emerson puts it in "Self-Reliance": "It is easy in the world to live after the world's opinion; it is easy in solitude to live after our own; but the great man is he who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude" (1983, 263). I would understand Emerson as pointing to an approach in which we establish a more authentic connection to ourselves. In this process, seeking out solitude in various forms, such as the experience of nature or looking within may be helpful, but in the end the goal is to be able to cultivate and maintain this connection to ourselves as much as possible as we engage in daily life. More broadly considered, this will help us have more authentic relations to others, and, as we shall see below, others may help us have more authentic experiences of ourselves.

Emerson, the Role of Others and Self-Culture

For Emerson, much as we have seen above in respect to Gadamer, opening to the other leads one towards letting go of dogmas and broadening one's horizons. In this respect, Emerson sees the value in 'outer dialogue,' but doesn't want this to distract us from our own vision. Self-reliance does not mean isolating oneself; for example, in the 1841 essay "Friendship," Emerson writes: "The soul environs itself with friends, that it may enter into a grander self-acquaintance or solitude; and it goes alone for a season, that it may exalt itself in conversation or society (1983, 344). Emerson also has a positive and optimistic view of human nature and potential, a hallmark of transcendentalism more generally, which is seen in his declaration in his 1844 essay "New England Reformers" that "nothing shall warp me from the belief, that every man is a lover of truth" (1983, 605). For Emerson, friends may help bring us towards deeper solitude, and solitude, in its turn, this helps promote better friendships, and both approaches are part of the same process. Emerson also discusses the experience of oneness through engaging in conversation and the need to respect rather than overpower another in his essay "The Over-Soul":

> If I am wilful, he [a conversational partner] sets his will against mine, one for one, and leaves me, if I please, the degradation of beating him by my superiority of strength. But if I renounce my will, and act for the soul, setting that up as umpire between us two, out of his young eyes looks the same soul; he revers and loves with me. (1983, 391)

This would seem to have affinities with Gadamer's I/Thou relation and its three ways of approaching a Thou, moving from the tendency to willfully argue for one's point of view and manipulate the other towards a more genuine and respectful communication and relation. Although Emerson uses the terminology of soul and Gadamer uses language and tradition to overcome the subject/object dualism, the basic structure is the same (two 'separate' subjects encompassed in a higher unity). This connection between metaphysics and the divine and language will be considered and developed further in later chapters.

It is important for Emerson that there is respect for the other; as he puts it in the 1862 lecture "Essential Principles of Religion": "Cannot we let people be themselves, and enjoy life in their own way? You are trying to make that man another *You*. One's enough" (2003, 237). Here we see that Emerson's emphasis on self-integrity extends to include the integrity of the other as well. Gustaaf Van Cromphout points to the importance of respecting the other for Emerson:

> Respect for the individuality, interdependence, and dignity of others is the dominant principle of Emerson's ethics in its other-regarding aspects. Unconditionally committed to the integrity of the self, Emerson quite naturally made concern for the selfhood of every person the criterion by which to judge attitudes and actions toward them. He recognized the inescapable moral implication of one's self in the selfhood of others: preserving the moral integrity of one's self precludes one's violating the integrity of any other self. (1999, 92)

This ethical impetus of respecting both oneself and the other is important and indicates a respect for difference. Ideally, Emerson's approach of self-reliance is one that everyone would engage as a process of self-development, a process would create a better community for all that would encourage everyone's individual creative potential in harmony with the whole.[48] As Emerson points to in his 1841 essay "Intellect**,**" when we follow ourselves we are self-reliant, and doing this also serves as a counterbalance to others:

> But whilst he gives himself up unreservedly to that which draws him, because that is his own, he is to refuse himself to that which draws him not, whatsoever fame and authority may attend it, because it is not his own. Entire self-reliance

[48] See Kateb (2014) who points to the democratic spirit of self-reliance.

> belongs to the intellect. One soul is a counterpoise to all souls, as a capillary column of water is a balance for the sea. It must treat things, and books, and sovereign genius, as itself also a sovereign. (1983, 427)

Here we see an important emphasis that Emerson places on discernment; if something does not suit us, we do not try to assimilate ourselves to it. Given that Hadot points to the importance of universal reason in ancient thought, Emerson's attention to the value of individual viewpoints and acknowledgement that entire self-reliance belongs to the intellect, Emerson's viewpoint provides us with an important modification of heightened insight of the experience of Mind, Intellect or Reason that considers the individual and unique. Nevertheless, as we have pointed to above, there is a strong tension between the individual and universal in Emerson's thought, and indeed, in the essay "Intellect," that the above passage comes from, Emerson is also encouraging the experience of the more universal viewpoints of the Intellect. A deeper exploration of these tensions and their implications awaits consideration in later chapters.

For Emerson, self-reliance is something that everyone could (and should) undertake, and the idea would be something to the effect that when everyone comes in contact with their own creative resources, which are essentially divine,[49] we may better collectively co-create our communities. Emerson writes in the "The Divinity School Address," that "[b]y trusting your own heart, you shall gain more confidence in other men" (1983, 89), which indicates self-trust fosters a greater trust in others. Emerson can be said to be very democratic in the sense that everyone has the potential to tap into their creative potential, and by doing so they would improve their own life as well as that of others in that they would be bringing their best to themselves and to the community. In this respect, there is an ethical impetus towards self-actualization and respect for the other and even perhaps encouraging others to realize their own potential (keeping in mind that for Emerson this would largely be through being a positive example for others through living a life of self-reliance, rather than for example taking a type two Gadamerian approach to a thou of 'knowing better' and telling others how to live their lives).

[49] Becoming godlike was an important conception in ancient thought. We will consider this in relation to Emerson's viewpoints in Chapter 6.

So, for Emerson, although there is a strong emphasis on listening within, as we have seen friendship can be an avenue for the expansion of one's horizon. So too can the process of culture, which can bring into question our false assumptions and open us towards more universal perspectives. As Emerson writes in the "Culture" chapter of his book *The Conduct of Life*, "[t]he pest of society is egotists" (1983, 1015) and he notes that "[t]he man runs round a ring formed by his own talent, falls into an admiration of it, and loses relation to the world. It is a tendency in all minds" (1983, 1016). Although Emerson is concerned about egotism, he also recognizes a healthy respect for individuality (1983, 1016-1017). The preservation of individual difference is something that is important to Emerson, but one needs self-culture to step out beyond one's limited viewpoints towards more flexible and open perspectives. According to Robert Richardson, Emerson "was […] moved by Goethe's emphasis on *Bildung*, self-cultivation or self-development, which is, after all, what Emerson's 'Self-Reliance' is all about" (2009, 79).[50] Buell (2003) points to the influence of Goethe and American Unitarianism's theory of self-culture of Emerson and explains that Emerson needed Goethe's approach because of its cosmopolitanism and fluidity to balance against the more moralizing Unitarian conception (2003, 62). This common influence of the *Bildung* tradition of German thought points to an affinity of Emerson's with Gadamer's understanding of *Bildung*, although Gadamer's primary influence in this respect is Hegel.[51] According to Van Cromphout:

> Emerson's moral emphasis in relation to self-culture explains his repeated insistence that there can be no full intellectual development without a parallel development of the moral faculty. Once again, his concern with harmonious self-realization is patent here. He wants no separate cultivation of intellect and virtue because he is convinced that both can advance only in tandem. (1999, 81)

[50] See Van Cromphout (1990) for the influence of Goethe on Emerson in respect to self-culture and more generally.

[51] Hegel and Gadamer were both certainly influenced by Goethe's conception of *Bildung* and Gadamer presents the idea of *Bildung* as "perhaps the greatest idea of the eighteenth century" and is "the atmosphere breathed by the human sciences of the nineteenth century". Gadamer states: "The concept of *Bildung* most clearly indicates the profound intellectual change that still causes us to experience the century of Goethe as contemporary […]" (2004, 8-9).

Here we find the mutual interplay between the "lived logic" of intellectual development and the "lived ethics" of ethical perspectives, and points to the kind of integrated development we find with ancient philosophy. For Emerson, we should seek an ethical life of self-realization and harmony with the whole, where self-reliance, moral development, self-culture are all ways to encourage moving beyond egotism to integrate more relational perspectives into our lives. As we have seen, despite the emphasis on self-reliance and looking within ("inner dialogue"), there is also an important emphasis in Emerson's thought for looking outward towards the other ("outer dialogue"), be it via nature,[52] books, self-culture, or otherwise, and even looking within leads to an ecstatic connection to a greater whole. In the end, the reason why one seeks privacy is to open up to the shared and common, and according to Emerson in the chapter "Culture" from *The Conduct of Life*, "[t]he saint and poet seek privacy to ends the most public and universal: and it is the secret of culture, to interest the man more in his public, than in his private quality" (1983, 1029).[53] For Emerson, the point of seeking privacy and solitude is to leave behind one's individual and collective habits to help re-orient oneself towards more authentic and relational viewpoints. Emerson points to the need to move past rigid and dogmatic perspectives in his essay "Intellect" when he writes: "Truth is our element of life, yet if a man fasten his attention on a single aspect of truth, and apply himself to that alone for a long time, the truth becomes distorted and not itself, but falsehood" (1983, 424). This points to the need to see limited perspectives in relation to a greater whole. This effort is, to use Hadot's term, a battle, a constant task of renewed effort towards change and self-transformation, and Emerson in his essay "Circles" remarks that "God offers to every mind his choice between truth and repose" (1983, 425), which points to the need for a constant impetus towards change and growth. We need to do battle with ourselves with our own inner dialogue to make the choices that will move us forward and change. For Emerson, taking upon ourselves a choice to pursue truth and self-realization is also an ethical process, one that involves dynamic transformation and a reorientation towards the whole. The roles of self-cultivation, self-reliance, and self-culture intertwine in such a way that one moves from the limitations and

[52] Emerson's understanding of nature will be explored in Chapter 6.

[53] In this respect it should be noted that Emerson earned his living as a public lecturer.

one-sided nature of one's own habits and collectively held customs towards more fluid and holistic perspectives. This is a new and refined individuality, manifesting aspects of oneself as a unique particular that has a relation to a greater whole. Emerson writes in his Journal on June 4, 1835, "Am I true to myself? Then Nations & ages do guide my pen. Then I perceive my commission to be coeval with the eldest causes" (*JMN5*, 49**)**. This points towards a sense of participatory unity that breaks past self-other dichotomies and is a form of dynamic participation, and for Emerson when one is most oneself one is also most public.

For Emerson, when it comes down to it, although listening to others is helpful, in the end we must learn self-trust and find what is of value to ourselves. Each person must be self-reliant, but care must be taken for this not to imply superiority or subservience:

> There are two mischievous superstitions. I know not which does the most harm: one, that "I am wiser than you," and the other, that "you are wiser than I." The truth is that every man is furnished, if he will heed it, with wisdom necessary to steer his own boat if he will not look away from his own to see how his neighbor steers his. (2008, 115)

Here we see a clear affinity to the problem of a type two I/Thou relation that Gadamer identifies and I have labelled the 'knows better' approach, but Emerson is also pointing to a flipside of this, where we may also give away authority to another. We will consider further below when we more broadly consider the relation between Gadamer's and Emerson's viewpoints.

Oneself and the Other – Inner and Outer Dialogue

As we have seen, Gadamer emphasizes the attempt to move away from one's rigid preconceptions. Although prejudices are positive and necessary in that they are our entry points into understanding, one should work towards the self-knowledge that promotes a sufficient awareness of them so that they may be brought into play and questioned. Vilhjálmur Árnason points to how openness to oneself is an aspect Gadamer's conception of openness and he notes that "the individual recognizes his radical finitude and the fact that he is dominated by prejudices. By means of this recognition he is able to slacken the bonds of his prejudgments and acquire new experience" (2000, 20). This initial recognition of how one is dominated by prejudices is an

important realization that opens up the possibility of self-transformation, and Árnason goes on explain:

> This openness to oneself and to experience is a prerequisite for all other aspects of openness, because it alone can make room for the claim of the other, the subject matter and the tradition. If this fundamental openness is not there, the individual will only perceive what confirms his own expectations and preconceptions. Because he lacks self-knowledge, or ignorance in the Socratic sense, he is blind to experience. (2000, 20)

Here we can see that openness to oneself is an important aspect of Gadamer's thought. Although Gadamer generally focusses on dialoguing with others, in places he points to the role of dialoguing with oneself and notes an affinity of this with Plato's understanding of the conversation a soul has with itself.[54] Having a conversation with another has strong affinities with having a conversation with oneself, and in fact, as we change our inner dialogue it affects our dialogue with others and as we learn to engage in dialogue differently with others, this change is reflected in our inner dialogue. It should also be noted that when Gadamer discusses the Greek notion of friendship, he writes: "Someone who is not friends with himself, but at odds with himself, is just not fit for any devotion to anyone else, or for any solidarity. It seems that the most profound basis for the self-alienation that we see spreading though modern civilized life lies here" (Gadamer 1998, 113). Friendship with oneself is thus a crucial aspect of having solidarity with others. Going out to another is a way of coming back to oneself:

[54] In the essay "Language and Understanding," Gadamer proposes that "the general process of reaching an understanding between persons and the process of understanding per se are both language-events that resemble the inner conversation of the soul with itself, a conversation which Plato asserted was the very essence of thinking" (2007, 92). Gadamer elsewhere writes: "I have pointed in the direction of the interchange involved in dialogue and toward the dialogical structure of language in which an entirely undogmatic dialectic is constantly enacted; and I have shown the way the language of a community is shaped in it beyond the explicit awareness of the individual speaker and how a step-by-step unveiling of being comes about in this way. This, however, is repeated in the conversation of the soul with itself, which since Plato is the way we think of thinking" (2007, 340). As Gadamer puts it in respect to giving accounts in the process of reaching a shared understanding, "the understanding that emerges is not primarily an understanding resulting from agreement with others but an understanding with oneself. Only people who have reached an understanding with themselves can be in agreement with others" (1991, 65).

> It is precisely in interpersonal relations that people open themselves up to the kind of intimacy that does not allow me to experience the other as another, as a limit to my own being-with-myself, but rather as an intensification, extension, and restoration of my own particular being, or even as breaking my self-willed obstinacy, and so helping me learn to recognize what is real. (1998, 29)

This would seem to have strong resonances with how Emerson sees other people as representative; that is, they may serve as examples to inspire us to our own potential (see Chapter 3 where this is discussed in more detail). I would also suggest that it reflects the type of self-transcendence that Emerson promotes, where through inner experience we experience a greater whole that moves us beyond our limited conceptions of self (and the ecstatic experience of being part of a greater whole through experiencing an interconnection with nature also plays an important role in Emerson's thought and will be explored in Chapter 6, which could be conceived of as a form of outer dialogue). The type of transcendence pointed to here also has resonances with experiences of transcendence and universality in ancient thought, but the attempt to play out the nuances and differences of Gadamer's and Emerson's viewpoints in relation to Hadot's reading of ancient philosophy and universality in a present-day context must await further exploration to later chapters.

For Gadamer, there seems to be a type of assumption that openness to the other is of intrinsic value. For Emerson, although openness is important, he also places an emphasis on discernment: "In unfit company the finest powers are paralyzed" (*W12,* 26). For Emerson, there is an interconnection or subtle influence between those we associate with, an 'unsaid conversation' of sorts, for better or for worse. This can be a positive experience: "if one remembers how contagious are the moral states of men, how much we are braced by the presence and actions of any Spartan soul, it does not need vigor of its own kind, but the spectacle of vigor of any kind, any prodigious power of performance wonderfully arms and recruits us" (*W12*, 23-24). Emerson has an important role for discernment as those we have connections with may inspire us if they are a positive influence or hold us back if their influence is negative. For Gadamer, although there is some discernment in the sense of following the subject matter, it could be argued that by opening oneself up to the other who presents the subject matter in a

distorted way could lead one away from truth.[55] I believe that one can perceive a fairly 'commonsensical' possible benefit and problem with each viewpoint: that is, Gadamer's approach of listening to the other may help lead us beyond our own prejudices, but with the possibility of being led in unhelpful directions if the other that one is dialoguing with is biased or presenting distorted positions; and for Emerson, with the greater emphasis on listening to oneself there is a stronger possibility for discernment in respect to the other's possible distortions, but a greater possibility of falling into back into one's own biases and illusions.[56] In this respect, I suggest that each perspective is complementary to the other.

'Soft' Practices, Guiding Ideas

We can see from the above discussion that with Gadamer, although there is a strong emphasis on openness to the other, there is also is a role for self-understanding in relation to oneself. With Emerson, although the entry point for self-reliance is our own individual experience, this is a dynamic relation to a greater whole. Thus, although it could be said that there is a stronger emphasis on an orientation to the other in Gadamer's thought and to oneself in Emerson's thought, this characterization is nuanced and both reserve an important role for self-understanding and relational perspectives. Both thinkers emphasize practical self-transformation, and I suggest that listening to the other and self-reliance can both be seen as ongoing practices that we must work at in our daily lives and can be seen as a part of philosophy as a way of life.

[55] Barthold (2010) defends Gadamer's commitment to openness against concerns that it precludes critical discernment or may lead to taking on abhorrent positions. She writes: "I believe that those who find fault with Gadamer's espousal of openness do so because they fail to note the way in which dialogue, as the paragon of understanding, requires a focus on *die Sache* and a willingness to justify oneself to another. In other words, having a good will to understand means not just being committed to listening to another but also being committed to justifying oneself. This prevents dialogue from turning into a non-critical encounter in which we unrealistically suspend our own beliefs or in which anything new is deemed worthy" (2010, 106).

[56] For example, Richard Shusterman points to the importance of opening to the views of others and that others provide a more accurate assessment of one's abilities than one's own self-reflection (2013, 49-50).

Although Gadamer places a strong emphasis on interpersonal conversation, this is a process of self-understanding. An important aspect of this is gathering enough awareness of the limitations of one's own perspectives to foster an openness to others to help move away from one's own partial viewpoints. This is an ongoing and life-long task and may be seen as a primary hermeneutic practice. In this respect, Gadamer's approaches of *Bildung*, "I and Thou," and conversation more generally may broadly be seen as a hermeneutic practice of what I will call 'learning to listen'. Gadamer, likely due to his aversion to method, does not tend to formalize 'methods' strongly, so this is an interpretive step in that direction. Keeping in mind Gadamer's concerns with method, I believe this should be seen in a soft sense as an orientation towards listening rather than a rigid prescription. In this respect, if we think of the many challenges and conflicts in the world today, we may wonder how much better we might negotiate these if we could but learn to listen to one another in a more genuine way. Gadamer points to the importance of listening:

> The hermeneutical experience […] has its own rigor: that of uninterrupted listening. A thing does not present itself to the hermeneutical experience without an effort special to it, namely that of "being negative toward itself." A person who is trying to understand a text has to keep something at a distance—namely everything that suggests itself, on the basis of his own prejudices, as the meaning expected—as soon as it is rejected by the sense of the text itself. (2004, 461)

If we consider the importance of distancing from our own prejudices within the context of the I/Thou practice discussed above, this may facilitate a loosening of one's attachment to habitual viewpoints so that one becomes able to bring one's prejudices into play for them to evolve and better reflect the subject matter. Gadamer explains that the "self-cancellation of the interpretation makes it possible for the thing itself—the meaning of the text—to assert itself" (2004, 461). Whether we are considering this in relation to a text or a conversation with another person, the movement from the type one 'manipulative' and type two 'knowing better' towards the preferable type three 'respectful and open' relation to the Thou may be seen as encouraging this "self-cancellation" and bringing one's prejudices further into play. Of course, given Gadamer's commitment to perspectives of finitude, such self-cancellation will never be complete.

Gadamer encourages a number of normative viewpoints such as openness, overcoming excessive purposefulness and curtailing manipulation, questioning the assumption that we know better, and encouraging truly listening to others. These can serve as soft 'guide-posts' or norms to help realize the normative emphasis of Gadamer's thought in practice and as a way of life. Crucially, for Gadamer, when we come across something that goes against what we are used to and prefer, the emphasis is to continue the process of listening to the other, which is actually a listening to the subject matter. This means that the emphasis is not on the speakers: "In a conversation, it is *something* that comes to language, not one or the other speaker" (1989a, 122). This fosters a distancing from one's prejudices, and, in fact, the very presence of the other is helpful in this respect: "The mere presence of the other before whom we stand helps us to break up our bias and narrowness, even before he opens his mouth to make a reply" (1989b, 26). This fundamental openness could be seen as learning to entertain the possibility that *we could be wrong*: "One must seek to understand the other, and that means that one has to believe that one could be in the wrong" (1989a, 119). The practice of 'learning to listen' may help bring one's prejudices into play so that rather than turning back to our own limited perspectives, there is an openness to evolving one's conceptions towards broader horizons which is a process of self-transformation.

Emerson emphasizes listening to oneself, and juxtaposed against Gadamer's viewpoint, I would suggest that Emerson encourages us to realize the possibility that if we listen to ourselves authentically, which is in relation to a greater whole, *we could be right*. For Emerson, self-reliance involves a concerted effort to listen to oneself rather than fall into false relations with others. This does not mean that we don't listen to others or that they cannot help us see in new ways, but the priority is to trust one's own experience. The emphasis here is that we have wisdom within ourselves which if we truly listen to may help break false habitual patterns. I would suggest that we could draw upon a sort of 'mirror image' of Gadamer's I/Thou approach to listening to the other in order to provide a helpful structure to conceive of listening to ourselves in relation to Emerson's viewpoint. That is, rather than falling into habits, of, for example, pleasing others or bowing to societal values which may seek to manipulate us into conformity, this may be seen as a mirror reflection of Gadamer's type one relation of manipulating others or what I will term 'manipulated conformists'. Likewise, a mirror reflection of

a Gadamerian type two relation or what I have termed ‘knowing best’ would be avoiding blindly following the advice of others or what they think is best for us, a viewpoint which I will call ‘others know best’. A mirroring of the type three relation to the Thou or what I have termed ‘respectful’ could be seen as learning not to impose false perspectives on ourselves but rather listen to who we truly are, what I will term being ‘self-respecting’. This could help provide a basic orientation for the process of encouraging greater self-reliance. Here we see the original I/Thou relation and the mirrored version below in table form:

Table 2: I/Thou Relation and Mirror Reflection

Gadamer – I/Thou Relation

	Type One	**Type Two**	**Type Three**
Keywords	**Manipulative**	**Knows Best**	**Respectful and Open**
Description	Self-serving and manipulative	Think they know what is best for others	Truly open to and respects the other

Emerson – Mirror Reflection

	Type One	**Type Two**	**Type Three**
Keywords	**Manipulated Conformists**	**Others Know Best**	**Self-Reliant**
Description	Unreflective bowing to societal values and custom	Unreflectively follows what others think is best for one – relies on outer authority	Open to and trusts oneself (meaning an authentic experience of being part of a greater whole)

For Emerson, distancing from the perspectives of others is likely a necessary part of this process. In the “The Transcendentalist”, he describes how the Transcendentalist “believes in miracle, in the perpetual openness of the human mind to new influx of light and power; he believes in inspiration, and in ecstasy” (1983, 196), an experience of transcendence beyond the self,

which points to both a skepticism of the normal way of experiencing the world and the role this may play in respect to fostering a space for the possibility of living one's inspirations rather than social norms. The solitude the Transcendentalist seeks is to maintain their own integrity and Emerson writes that "[t]hey say to themselves, It is better to be alone than in bad company. And it is really a wish to be met,—the wish to find society for their hope and religion,—which prompts them to shun what is called society" (1983, 202). It is not that the Transcendentalist seeks solitude for the sake of solitude, but rather they need a space to nurture their ideals. For Emerson, perishing is falling into conformity, and he is seeking to spur his readers to a higher calling that helps them avoid this.[57] In this respect, focusing on agreement with others as Gadamer suggests could take away from the need to disagree at times, as one may be drawn into collective values.[58] Greenham, who emphasizes a linguistic reading of Emerson, explains that "[i]n addressing ourselves to the other, and, moreover, addressing ourselves to ourselves, our words betray our self-presence (read 'self-reliance'). Emerson's self-presence/reliance, then, arises not in his unity in language, but in his difference with it" (2012, 153). In this respect, our unique expression must not be discounted in order to conform with the expectations of others and Greenham discusses the need for solitude and isolation and remarks that "[w]e must, then, wrest ourselves from language if we are to

[57] For example, see Nathaniel Hawthorne's short story "The Artist of the Beautiful," where he portrays the difficulties for a young artisan who is attempting to bring his beautiful vision into creation and the challenges that ensue when sharing ideals and attempting to live a life with others. I would understand a moral of the story as being that one needs to stand behind oneself and one's ideals to foster their actualization. The point I am making in respect to Gadamer and Emerson is that the very act of seeking agreement with others may distract oneself from the radical possibilities of one's own unique vision and so could be lost, both to the detriment of oneself and the potential benefit that following this vision may give to the world at large. As Hawthorne writes: "[I]deas, which grow up within the imagination and appear so lovely to it and of a value beyond whatever men call valuable, are exposed to be shattered and annihilated by contact with the practical. It is requisite for the ideal artist to possess a force of character that seems hardly compatible with its delicacy; he must keep his faith in himself while the incredulous world assails him with its utter disbelief; he must stand up against mankind and be his own sole disciple, both as respects his genius and the objects to which it is directed" (1992, 81).

[58] Nevertheless, Gadamer is certainly aware of the possibility for collective values to adversely impact our individuality. For example, he notes that "[i]n a technological civilization it is inevitable in the long run that the adaptive power of the individual is rewarded more than his creative power" (1982, 73-74).

find ourselves in language, to be marked by our difference" (2012, 155). Much depends on how we use language, as language on the one hand opens up possibilities to us and on the other hand constrain us. In respect to overcoming conformity within language through looking to ourselves, Greenham points to a role of shame to foster experiencing our difference from the stagnation of society and custom in order to help find ourselves: "Shame, then, is the missing parallax that will enable us to triangulate the location of our transcendental, and thus fallen, self" (2012, 155). On Greenham's account, by reconnecting with ourselves we may either recognize our inherent possibility or fall back into our previous habits: "We either find ourselves in language, or we are overcome by it, lost in it, fallen in it" (2012, 155). Thus, shame is a state that may spur us to movement and may be overcome through a different experience of language. In this reading of Emerson, self-reliance may be found within language and in heightened states of language such as poetic language. The experience of shame, of course, is not the only way that might be used to discover this difference. For example, the potential joy of ecstatic experience or a fulfilling vocation in contrast with potentially dreary and boring perspectives of the everyday or an unfulfilling job could also be drawn upon to encourage transformation, or perhaps the fulfilling experience of something novel such as intuitive insight in contrast to our habitual thoughts and actions. Whether this is pursued within the scope of how we use language or otherwise, the main point from an Emersonian perspective is to learn to listen to one's insights and to give credence to and nurture them.

For Emerson, one does not have to 'teach' others – that is, unlike the Gadamer's type two relation that I have termed 'knows best', we do not know better. In fact, Emerson states that "[t]here is always a loss of truth and power when a man leaves working for himself to work for another. Absolutely speaking, I can only work for myself. All my good is magnetic, and I educate not by lessons but by going about my business" (*W12*, 30). However, when one is truly coming from one's own truth, there is a positive influence on the other, which I believe is can be seen as the 'other side of the coin' or a mirror reflection of Gadamer's type three 'respectful and open' approach. Within Emerson's conception, ideally, we all would listen to ourselves and allow the freedom to others to do the same. To continue with the last passage above from Emerson:

> When, moved by love, a man teaches his child or joins with his neighbor in any act of common benefit, or spends himself for his friend, or rushes at immense personal sacrifice on some public, self-immolating act, it is not done for others, but to fulfil a high necessity of his proper character. The benefit to others is contingent and not contemplated by the doer. (*W12*, 30)

Here we can see that Emerson's 'individualism' is actually a very nuanced conception that implies a strong love and respect for others, but this is not done out of something like duty but through fulfilling the moral necessity of one's character. In this respect, there is an emphasis in Emerson's thought on following oneself, but it must be emphasized that this isn't a type of subjective relativism. Rather one's own unique experience is an entry point towards the universal. Likewise, for Gadamer, listening to the other is not a matter of falling into blindly agreeing with others, but a way of breaking past one's prejudices to move towards more universal perspectives. In this respect, the process of listening to others and to oneself is not necessarily an either/or proposition, and in fact may be seen as complementary processes. Table 3 below contains both the keywords I suggested for Gadamer's I/Thou relation and that I developed in relation to Emerson.

Table 3: Synthesis of I/Thou Relation and Mirror Reflection

	Type One	**TypeTwo**	**Type Three**
Keywords	**Manipulative/ Manipulated**	**Knows Best/Others Know Best**	**Respectful and Open/Self-Reliant**
Description of Self-Development Needed	Overcome tendency to manipulate and be manipulated.	Overcome tendency to unreflectively relate to others as if one is an authority or unreflectively consider others as authorities.	Open to and respectful of both oneself and others.

A type of dialogue or dialectic between listening to oneself and others could be developed with the aim of moving towards more universal perspectives that also maintain the integrity of difference. In fact, with both

thinkers there is a blurring between inner and outer, community and solitude, and in the end, this is more fundamentally the interrelation between the one and the many. For neither thinker is a particular subsumed under a universal genus, but rather they both hold viewpoints of dynamic participation as the play between part and whole. This approach of dynamic participation is one that blurs the edges between self and other and is something that will be considered further in later chapters.

Considered practically, given this dynamic blurring between subject and object or between persons, one way to looking at this is that whether one is pursuing self-reliance or listening to the other, both lead to more relational experiences which bring our habits, prejudices, and viewpoints of rigid boundaries between self and others into play. From this point of view, either approach may help promote perspectives of greater holism, but I am suggesting that together they may better cover the aspects of inner and outer dialogue that Hadot points to than each may do alone. In this respect, given the importance of transcendence towards greater universality for Hadot, Gadamer and Emerson provide two complementary approaches to transcendence with different emphases. Gadamer has been criticized for not incorporating enough appreciation of difference into his thought and Emerson has be criticized for excessive individualism, but, consequently, Gadamer's emphasis on agreement and Emerson's on individual viewpoints may help balance the potential excesses of each perspective.[59] In this respect, I suggest that Gadamer's and Emerson's approaches may be seen as complementary and can be used to balance the other's perspective in order to both better listen to others and oneself, a dialectical movement of learning and self-transformation.

[59] See *Dialogue and Deconstruction: The Gadamer-Derrida Encounter* (Michelfelder and Palmer (1989) for Derrida's and other thinkers' concerns in respect to Gadamer not sufficiently considering difference and Gadamer's responses. Nevertheless, there is arguably a tendency to emphasize universality in Gadamer's thought. See Gura (2008, 212-217) for a discussion of how Emerson and Transcendentalism became associated with extreme individualism, and the tensions within the movement as some members sought a greater role for social reform.

Chapter 3 - Tradition and Interpretation

This chapter will consider how the interpretation of tradition may be seen as a form of transformative spiritual practice. The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section will consider Gadamer's approach to the interpretation of texts and Hadot's criticism of it, as well as offering a brief look at Hadot's own approach to interpretation; the second section examines how Emerson engages tradition; and the third section considers the practice of interpretation in relation to our three thinkers.

Gadamer: Tradition and Application

As was explored in Chapter 2 in respect to Gadamer's notions of *Bildung* and conversation, an important aspect of Gadamer's hermeneutics consists in bringing prejudices into play with the goal of moving beyond fixed points of view towards more fluid and open perspectives. This section will explore this in further detail and in the light of the important role that tradition plays in Gadamer's thought. In particular the productive and dynamic nature of interpretation will be examined and attention will be paid to how interpretation may be seen as a self-transformative practice.

For Gadamer, the interpretation of texts is a process of self-understanding and transformation by which we also participate in the dynamic and on-going flow of tradition. Tradition is something that we find ourselves immersed in, and we start from our embeddedness in a context and from our own prejudices which serve as entry points for our understanding and relation to tradition (see Gadamer, 2004). Although we cannot eliminate our prejudices in the false hope of an 'objective' point of view, we can bring them into question and evolve them towards more fluid and productive perspectives. Gadamer writes: "The prejudices and fore-meanings that occupy the interpreter's consciousness are not at his free disposal. He cannot separate in advance the productive prejudices that enable understanding from the prejudices that hinder it and lead to misunderstandings," and Gadamer goes on to note that "this separation must take place in the process of understanding itself" (2004, 295). It is through the process of understanding

and interpretation that the prejudices are brought into play and Gadamer points to how an encounter with a text can provoke our prejudices and bring them into our awareness. According to Gadamer, understanding requires "the fundamental suspension of our own prejudices" (2004, 298), and such suspension occurs through questioning. Through this openness our prejudices are opened up for the possibility of revision. Openness and learning to question are crucial hermeneutic practices, whether in respect to dialogue with others as discussed in Chapter 2, or with tradition as is our current focus. Tradition is not an object that stands outside us but rather is something that we are immersed in, and although we may learn from tradition, we can never achieve a perfect knowing, as indicated when Gadamer remarks that "*[t]o be historically means that knowledge of oneself can never be complete*" (2004, 301).[60] Nevertheless, the "[t]he tradition asserts its own truth in being understood, and disturbs the horizon that had, until then, surrounded us" (2004, 480). The understanding of tradition is an ontological happening or event through which we have the opportunity to transcend our previous stance towards the subject-matter. This process is something that we are taken up in and which we cannot fully control. Understanding is a risk as we do not know beforehand which prejudices will be revised and how we will potentially be changed.

This emphasis on interpretation as a process that may bring our prejudices into play for potential revision does not mean that there is no place for self-reflection, but rather that we should not delude ourselves into thinking that this process can ever be complete or reach a point of full self-conscious clarity.[61] Self-reflection will never be complete and has the more modest goal of bringing some preconceptions to light. In this respect, although Gadamer is at pains at times to point out the limitations of self-reflection, I would suggest that self-reflection plays an important role in his hermeneutics once we understand its limitations. Gadamer seeks to distance

[60] Gadamer contrasts nineteenth-century hermeneutic theory, for which the back and forth movement between interpreter and text ends with perfect understanding and Heidegger's viewpoint, which Gadamer follows, for which an understanding of the text always relates to our fore-conceptions (see Gadamer 2004, 293).

[61] Gadamer points to both the value and limitation of self-reflection: "Clearly, reflection on a prevailing preconception brings something before me which otherwise happens behind my back. Something—not everything. For effective historical consciousness is inescapably more existence than it is consciousness" (1986a, 288).

his point of view from scientific viewpoints and Hegelian perspectives that emphasize self-consciousness and potentially the achievement of complete clarity, and his emphasis is on self-understanding as something that we are caught up in and is an event that happens to us (see Gadamer, 2004). The act of understanding is not that of an isolated subject standing dualistically against tradition as an object but rather is a form of participation and transcendence. Gadamer's explains his concept of the hermeneutic circle and describes how this relates to engaging tradition:

> The circle, then, is not formal in nature. It is neither subjective nor objective, but describes understanding as the interplay of the movement of tradition and the movement of the interpreter. The anticipation of meaning that governs our understanding of a text is not an act of subjectivity, but proceeds from the commonality that binds us to the tradition. But this commonality is constantly being formed in our relation to tradition. Tradition is not simply a permanent precondition; rather, we produce it ourselves inasmuch as we understand, participate in the evolution of tradition, and hence further determine it ourselves. Thus the circle of understanding is not a "methodological" circle, but describes an element of the ontological structure of understanding. (2004, 293-294)

Here we see the interaction between part and whole which informs Gadamer's viewpoint. We start from our fore-conceptions which come from the commonality we have with tradition, which we may transcend through a richer experience of tradition. Tradition is not something that objectively stands outside of us and we play a role co-creating it (however modest). Thus, in the process of understanding we bring our partial viewpoints and attempt to harmonize them with the whole in such a way that our self-understanding is changed, a process that is dynamic and ongoing. An act of interpretation not only changes us, but also contributes to tradition itself. We need to be open to what a text has to say to us and Gadamer contends that texts have a certain authority and may be more informed that we are (2004, 294). If something different from us is not understood, we may work towards understanding it better, and is through challenges to our understanding and the confusion and difficulties that this creates that we may be provoked into reconsidering and revising our viewpoints. In respect to discovering the difference in our own language and understanding and that of the text, Gadamer writes:

> I think we must say that generally we do so in the experience of being pulled up short by the text. Either it does not yield any meaning at all or its meaning is not compatible with what we had expected. This what brings us up short and alerts us to a possible difference in usage. (2004, 270)

Rather than stubbornly holding onto our "own accidental fore-meanings" (2004, 271) and avoiding the meaning of a text, Gadamer points to the need to open ourselves to the alterity of the text as "[i]t is the tyranny of hidden prejudices that makes us deaf to what speaks to us in tradition" (2004, 272). For Gadamer, "[h]ermeneutic work is based on a polarity of familiarity and strangeness" (2004, 295), and when we work to understand a traditional text, there is a play between the strange and familiar. Gadamer notes that "*[t]he true locus of hermeneutics is this in-between*" (2004, 295). This is a process of distancing ourselves from our own prejudices and although in this process we do not make ourselves subservient to a text, we take upon ourselves the effort to consider that the text could be right and so we are open to revising our prejudices through questioning, which is a movement beyond both the particularity of oneself and the text.

According to Gadamer, we need to transpose ourselves into the horizon of the past rather than holding onto our contemporary viewpoint, but this isn't a matter of cultivating a disinterested viewpoint. There is no tradition of the past from which we are separate, but rather everything is contained in a single moving historical horizon (2004, 303). Gadamer describes the process of transposition as follows:

> Transposing ourselves consists neither in the empathy of one individual for another nor in subordinating another person to our own standards; rather, it always involves rising to a higher universality that overcomes not only our own particularity but also that of the other. The concept of "horizon" suggests itself because it expresses the superior breadth of vision that the person who is trying to understand must have. To acquire a horizon means that one learns to look beyond what is close at hand—not in order to look away from it but to see it better, within a larger whole and in truer proportion. (2004, 304)

For Gadamer, we are not separated subjects or egos, but rather co-participants in the flow of language and tradition and our finite situation entails a limitation of vision: "The horizon is the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point" (2004, 301). Gadamer points to how a horizon may be limited but also to how we may also cultivate the ability to see beyond what is close to us and the open-

minded experience of tradition allows us to experience a greater horizon. In this respect, we do not have one horizon in contrast to tradition, but rather we are mutually implicated in and participate in the greater horizon of tradition, a part within a greater whole. There is always the danger of not truly engaging with what we find in tradition and falling into our habitual prejudices and contemporary collective assumptions. A subtle balance is needed between imposing our own views on a text and being overrun by the text, and Gadamer points to a "fusion of horizons," a surpassing of one's own and the horizon of the text, although it should be kept in mind that for Gadamer that these are not two separated horizons. Gadamer explains why he uses this term:

> If, however, there is no such thing as these distinct horizons, why do we speak of the fusion of horizons and not simply of the formation of the one horizon, whose bounds are set in the depths of tradition? […] Every encounter with tradition that takes place within historical consciousness involves the experience of a tension between the text and the present. The hermeneutic task consists in not covering up this tension by attempting a naïve assimilation of the two but in consciously bringing it out. (2004, 305)

This fusion is something that leads to a productive evolution in thought. For Gadamer, we neither find ourselves assimilated to or completely separate from tradition or works found within it. We could say that this is a process of 'lived logic,' where both our individual and collective *logos* are both maintained and transformed (keeping in mind that the dualism of an individual subject standing against tradition and language is something Gadamer is working against, but I put it this way to show that individual and collective change go hand-in-hand). In this respect, for ancient thought, our rational faculty is the highest faculty that we have and which we have an affinity to Reason or Mind running through reality. Drawing upon Gadamer's terminology, we could say that for ancient thought Mind or Reason has a greater and more unified horizon which is not separate from us; indeed, our highest human aspects relate to Reason and we may transcend ourselves from experiencing Reason. For Gadamer, "[r]eason exists for us only in concrete, historical terms—i.e., it is given not its own master but remains constantly dependent on the given circumstances in which it operates" (2004, 277). The type of reason that runs through tradition and language allows for an ontologically based linguistically inspired form of

transcendence.[62] That is, we may experience reason and universality through interpreting tradition, an experience of self-transcendence akin to ancient thought in ways. However, this is experienced through language, a dynamic ontological event and happening within tradition rather than an experience of being overcome by a supra-historical Mind or Reason. More will be said of these affinities and differences below and in later chapters; the main thing at this point is to consider that both approaches promote experiences of universality and self-transcendence.

In Gadamer's account of interpretation, there is both a receptive aspect (openness to tradition) and a creative aspect (application, to be discussed further below) that leads to a dynamic movement of thought as it is applied to our current concerns. This process occurs within language, as "*language is the universal medium in which understanding occurs. Understanding occurs in interpreting*" (2004, 390). In respect to interpretation, Gadamer does not emphasize authorial intent, although this does play a part (see Grondin, 2002). For Gadamer, understanding is a productive and generative process and this entails, as he explains, that "[n]ot just occasionally but always, the meaning of a text goes beyond its author. That is why understanding is not merely a reproductive but always a productive activity as well" (2004, 296). The productive aspect of interpretation is something that is crucial to Gadamer's thought, as the goal is not merely to attempt to recapitulate what has already been, but to enter into a relation with tradition in order to be inspired by it to bring it into new forms.[63]

In order to further understand Gadamer's approach to interpretation, we will turn to his concept of application. According to Gadamer, the legal or theological text is not only to be understood as something historical but is to be applied in a current situation, so "if it is to be understood properly […] the claim it makes—must be understood at every moment, in every concrete situation, in a new and different way. Understanding here is always application" (2004, 307-308). Understanding is a creative event, where the interpreter's perspective is held in a tension of distance and proximity with

[62] See Davies (2010) who points to the importance of transcendence for Gadamer's hermeneutics through language, which he characterizes as a non-metaphysical way of incorporating transcendence.

[63] As Gadamer writes: "Every age has to understand a transmitted text in its own way, for the text belongs to the whole tradition whose content interests the age and in which it seeks to understand itself" (2004, 296)

the text or subject matter. The point of a legal interpretation is not to just provide a historically objective understanding of law, but to bring the law to bear on a particular situation. A good application of the law is not arbitrary, but neither is it a rigid recapitulation; that is, it should consider the spirit of the law as it is applied. Gadamer draws upon Aristotle's conception of *phronesis* (practical wisdom) to develop his conception of application and he describes the importance of Aristotelian ethics for his endeavor:

> If the heart of the hermeneutical problem is that one and the same tradition must time and again be understood in a different way, the problem, logically speaking, concerns the relationship between the universal and the particular. Understanding, then, is a special case of applying something universal to a particular situation. This makes *Aristotelian ethics* especially important for us. (2004, 310)

Although Gadamer acknowledges that Aristotle is not dealing with the hermeneutic problem and the historical dimension but rather with the function that reason plays in relation to moral action, he explains that "what interests us here is precisely that he is concerned with reason and with knowledge, not detached from a being that is becoming, but determined by it and determinative of it" (2004, 310). It is through this process of *phronesis* that we may experience the universal vantage points which for Gadamer are offered to us in tradition and apply these viewpoints dynamically back into our particular interpretive situation. Gadamer points to the distinction Aristotle makes between *techne* or technical knowledge which applies a general principle as a craftsman does, and self-knowledge, which requires that generalities be applied back into the concrete situation, for, unlike the craftsman, "[w]hat is right […] cannot be fully determined independently of the situation that requires a right action for me" (2004, 315). Gadamer points out that in applying the law there is ambiguity, and unlike the craftsman who in making a product may need to adapt himself to a situation, here there is possibility of making a better law (2004, 315-316). What I want to focus on at this point is that rather than appealing to preformed universals that impose themselves on particulars, for Gadamer the experience of tradition is a reciprocal, evolving and a productive movement.

Just as Gadamer points towards treating the other in conversation as a 'Thou,' so too is tradition to be approached as such: "For tradition is a genuine partner in dialogue, and we belong to it, as does the I with a Thou"

(2004, 352). This is not a matter of finding preformed viewpoints within tradition, but of taking them up anew with a productive experience of emergence through our concrete situation. Likewise, just as was discussed in Chapter 2 in respect to dialogue, we must be true to the subject matter itself (e.g. we cannot interpret something based only on personal whim) and the way tradition presents the subject matter has some truth for Gadamer.[64] However, this does not mean that we cannot criticize aspects of tradition. For example, Gadamer draws upon ancient philosophy to criticize aspects of contemporary thought from within the tradition itself. Thus, if one is interpreting ancient thought from a contemporary point of view, one must also be open to changing our contemporary point of view. At the same time we must acknowledge our own historicity and our own concrete situation as a crucial aspect of interpretation. This is not an abstract task or an attempt at an objective understanding, and Gadamer describes what it means to think historically:

> *To think historically* means, in fact, *to perform the transposition that the concepts of the past undergo* when we try to think in them. To think historically always involves mediating between those ideas and one's own thinking. To try to escape from one's own concepts in interpretation is not only impossible but manifestly absurd. To interpret means precisely to bring one's own preconceptions into play so that the text's meaning can really be made to speak for us. (2004, 398)

Here Gadamer is making his point in respect to human limitation, meaning that he feels that it is impossible to completely step out of our concepts. Nevertheless, his hermeneutics is a process of attempting to work in this direction of universality as much as possible, but this involves respecting plurality as well. Prejudices that are true to the subject matter provide vantage points, and when applied back into our present situation are productive. In this respect, overcoming all prejudices is not only impossible, but would actually be taking away from creative possibility.

This process of historical thinking and interpretation, which Gadamer calls "historically effected consciousness" can be seen, just as with his conception of dialogue, as a type of practice that encourages self-

[64] In this respect, Gadamer has been criticized for conservatism because of the authority that tradition has in his thought. See Warnke (1987) for a consideration of conservatism and authority in Gadamer's thought.

development in the spirit of philosophy as a way of life. This is a process of mediation and metamorphosis, where we undergo historical transitions within ourselves, dynamically opening ourselves to new possibilities. Tradition serves as a basis for truth for Gadamer, and his conception of an eminent text plays an important role in this respect. These are literary or poetic texts that are exemplary within the tradition and embody a truth that primarily stands in itself:

> What precisely does not exist in such a text is something that elsewhere justifies the truth claim of assertions, namely the kind of relationship to "reality" which one is used to call "reference." A text is poetic when it does not admit such a relation to truth at all or at best allows it only a secondary sense. This is the case with all texts which we classify as "literature." The literary work of art possesses its own autonomy, and this means its explicit freedom from that question of truth which qualifies assertions, be they spoken or written, as true or false. (1980a, 3)

Such texts embody a rich and ongoing source of truth and hold their truth value within themselves. This reflects Gadamer's presentational account of truth, where the basis of such truth lies within its presentations rather than pointing beyond itself (more will be said on this in Chapter 5). He explains that "[t]he eminent text is a construct which wants to be read anew, again and again, even when it has already been understood" and later notes that "[a] poetic text is not like a sentence in the ongoing flux of speech, but rather it is like something whole which lifts itself out of the stream of speech that is flowing past" (1980a, 6). This points towards the elevated perspectives of such texts and how they are eminent sources of truth. These texts and our ongoing experience of and participation with them is not separate from the everyday or our subjectivity but rather emergent intensifications. A deeper exploration of such intensified experience must wait until we explore Gadamer's aesthetics in Chapter 5. At this point, what is noteworthy is that for Gadamer eminent texts are tangible placeholders of truth which promote transcendence and self-transformation. Grondin writes that "[t]o be sure, there is no timeless truth for Gadamer, but history itself does provide – herein lies the productivity of temporal distance and the core of his argument – the experience of something like a timeless truth, that is, something that stands out and is thus not relativizable in its truth claim" (Grondin 2010, 197). Indeed, for Gadamer, the truths of the humanities are enduring: "[T]he great achievements in the human sciences almost never

become outdated" (2004, 285). The points to a certain historically based form of 'permanence' and truth.

Hadot's Conception of Interpretation and his Criticism of Gadamer

We will now briefly look at Hadot's conception of interpretation and his criticism of Gadamer in order to help us compare Hadot's and Gadamer's approaches to interpretation. Hadot reminds us that we live in a different world than ancient thinkers did:

> [T]he modern reader might imagine—and no one is safe from this error—that the ancient author lives in the same intellectual world as he does. The reader will treat the author's affirmations exactly as if they came from a contemporary author, and will therefore think he has immediately understood what the author meant. In fact, however, this understanding will be anachronistic, and the reader will often run the risk of committing serious mistranslations. (2001, ix)

Here we see similar concerns that Gadamer has about imposing our modern conceptions on our interpretations of texts from the past and the need to recognize the difference between our modern mindset and the ancient one.[65] Hadot points to the difficulty of successfully doing this, and remarks that "we tend to project attitudes and intentions proper to our era onto the past" (2001, ix), a sentiment with which Gadamer most surely would have agreed.

Hadot emphasizes a very close reading of the text and places a strong priority on authorial intention.[66] Hadot points to the need for a close exploration of the context of the ancient work in a wide sense, including "the material, social, and political situation as well as the political and rhetorical

[65] As Gadamer writes: "We are always affected, in hope and fear, by what is nearest to us, and hence we approach the testimony of the past under its influence. Thus it is constantly necessary to guard against overhastily assimilating the past to our own expectations of meaning. Only then can we listen to tradition in a way that permits it to make its own meaning heard" (2004, 304).

[66] This having been said, Hadot does not rule out any attempt at interpretation beyond authorial intention, but this should be grounded in a more basic meaning and he explains that "[i]t is absolutely indispensable to go in the direction of a basic meaning, to which we can then refer in order to uncover, if we should so wish, those meanings of which the author was perhaps not conscious" (2001, ix).

universe of thought" (2001, ix). In comparison Gadamer places little emphasis on authorial intent (and rather seeks what question the work is an answer to), but as with Hadot places an emphasis on context (although Gadamer has been criticized for not always following through on this in his own interpretations of ancient thought).[67]

Hadot is critical of Gadamer's approach, drawing affinities between it and Stefan George's critique of historicism. Historicism is the point of view where the interpreter can exclude his own perspective and gain an objective understanding. As we have seen above, Gadamer's own viewpoint of historically effected consciousness assumes that there will always be some prejudices and thinking that we can be objective is illusory. In his introduction to Ernst Bertram's book *Nietzsche: An Attempt at a Mythology*, Hadot explains that Gadamer's approach is one that approaches the historical past in an existential manner and involves a "fusion that takes place between the historical horizon and the horizon of the present" (2010, 75). As we have seen is a correct assessment and Hadot broadly agrees with the importance of historical interpretation for the present:

> That the historian is himself an historical being, that the past can only be thought in the present, by a living being who necessarily has a particular perspective: all of this is hard to deny. That it is a matter of existential urgency to give a personal, living, formative sense to our enquiries into the past—that is what historians and philosophers of Antiquity had long taught. (2010, 75)

Here we can see a basic agreement that an important aspect of interpretation is to apply it to one's own life and make its one's own, which Hadot also connects with ancient thought. However, Hadot goes on to contend:

> Unfortunately, however, one witnessed the development, through the twentieth century, under the influence of Nietzsche, George, Heidegger, and Gadamer, of certain interpretative *practices* that led to genuine aberrations. Nietzsche's phrase […] is its fundamental principle: "One and the same text permits innumerable interpretations—there is no 'correct' interpretation." (2010, 76)

[67] Catherine Zuchart writes in respect to Gadamer's interpretation of Plato: "He [Gadamer] often violates his own strictures about the need to read the dialogues as discrete works or wholes in which the character of the particular participants must be related to the specific setting and action" (2002, 219).

In Hadot's view, approaches such as Gadamer's lead to liberties with interpreting texts and he claims that "this resulted in interpretations that are absolutely phantasmagorical" (2010, 76). In contrast, he advocates: "We must firmly maintain the opposite principle: 'The same text cannot license all interpretations. There are valid interpretations and inadmissible ones'" (2010, 76). In Gadamer's defence, he places a strong emphasis on following the subject matter and truth plays an important role in his hermeneutics, so there is some limitation on the scope of interpretation.[68] There are true and false prejudices, and the latter should be worked towards by following the subject matter rather than one's own opinions. However, Hadot remarks that "[t]he dangers inherent in these new historical methods […] seem to me to be considerable" (2010, 77), but he also sees them as a helpful reaction against positivism: "The regression [of this approach to interpretation] was salutary, insofar as one thus rediscovered, in the guise of new expressions, the idea of a truth that may be achieved only by transforming oneself" (2010, 76). So, although Hadot characterizes the new historical methods as being a backward step of sorts, this was positive in respect to the acknowledgment of the role of self-transformation (which Hadot connects to the conception of truth found within ancient thought that he points to in his conception of philosophy as a way of life). As we have seen, self-transformation is an important aspect of Gadamer's hermeneutics. As Gadamer writes, "[t]he description of the inner structure and coherence of a given text and the mere repetition of what the author says is not yet real understanding," which for Gadamer requires the interpreter to "bring the author's speaking back to life again," which involves becoming "familiar with the realities about which the text speaks" (2007, 236). This points to the need to stay with the subject matter rather falling into false opinions, but nevertheless, our own viewpoints are necessary in the act of understanding in order to really understand and renew and bring such viewpoints alive again. In this respect, Gadamer provides an account of truth that avoids the "Cartesian moment" that Foucault points to — that is, Gadamer's account is one where self-understanding is an experience of truth in which we are changed, and this is a productive process. Put another way, in Gadamer's view the attempt to objectively understand a text isn't a real understanding; rather one will fall

[68] This having been said, for example, Gadamer's interpretation of Plato is unorthodox.

into thinking one is being objective when one is actually following unexamined prejudices.

Elsewhere, Hadot characterizes Gadamer's approach as "show[ing] that the subject does indeed interpret texts as a function of its subjectivity" (2011, 61) which I would take as an indication of the perspectival aspect of Gadamer's thought. However, as we have seen in Gadamer's account of understanding, although a person starts from their perspective and prejudices, these should be transcended to whatever extent possible. This is a process of self-transformation and the point is not to attempt to turn an interpretation into one's subjective preferences. Gadamer's hermeneutics is a practice by which our viewpoints are brought up short, which involves an act of transcendence towards more universal perspectives or more 'objective' viewpoints, keeping in mind the limitations of objectivity from a Gadamerian perspective. In this sense, Gadamer's position may actually be closer to Hadot's own than Hadot realizes. As pointed out in Chapter 1, Gadamer has been criticized as too relativistic by some thinkers and too universalistic by others, which I think speaks to the tension inherent in his attempt to incorporate plurality and universality.

Now, Hadot sees the attempt to interpret ancient texts as a practice: "To gain access to them once more, we will have to practice a kind of spiritual exercise or intellectual aesthetics, in order to free ourselves from certain prejudices and rediscover what is, for us, almost another way of thinking" (2001, vii-viii). In my view, there is nothing particularly 'un-Gadamerian' in this statement, in that we have seen that the goal of interpretation for Gadamer is to bring our prejudices into play and transform ourselves through this. As we have seen, objectivity is important to Hadot and he associates this with interpretation as a spiritual exercise:

> The problem of scientific objectivity is extremely interesting from the point of view of spiritual exercises. Since Aristotle, it has been recognized that science should be disinterested. To study a text, or microbes, or the stars, one must rid oneself of one's subjectivity. Gadamer […] will say, that is impossible. But I nevertheless think it is an ideal that one must attempt to attain through a certain practice. Thus, the scholars who have the courage to admit that they were mistaken in a particular case, or who try not to let themselves be influenced by their own prejudices, are carrying out a spiritual exercise of detachment from the self. Let us say that objectivity is a virtue, and one that is very difficult to practice. (2011, 66-67)

Here Hadot is characterizing the practice of interpretation as a form of spiritual exercise. Hadot points to objectivity as being a virtue and perspectival viewpoints are apparently seen as a kind of vice and weakness. This seems to involve a complete detachment from our subjectivity and a rigorous attempt at objectivity and a movement beyond all our prejudices, which Gadamer claims is impossible (and, in fact, this would be potentially illusory, as we would be unconscious of our prejudices influencing our interpretation). In many ways, this effort towards objectivity has a parallel with the ancient philosophical practices that Hadot points to and their impetus to objectivity. In this respect, Hadot would seem to adhere to assumptions about the superiority of objectivity, which would seem not only to apply to his understanding of interpretation, but to his thought more generally. Again, as we have seen, Gadamer's approach to tradition is also an effort to move past one's subjectivity and unexamined prejudices toward universality. However, for Gadamer our prejudices can never be completely removed, nor are we ever so separate from tradition that we need to concern ourselves with completely extinguishing ourselves to participate in it, as we are already taken up within the broader flow of tradition and language. Pierre Force remarks:

> Hadot insists that 'the meaning intended by the ancient author is never current (*actuel*). It is ancient, and that is all there is to it.' To us, these forms of life are dead, and Hadot does not subscribe to the romantic belief that the past can be somehow brought back to life by the power of historical inquiry. The only way we can find spiritual nourishment in the ancient philosophical texts and get something from them that sustains our lives is by ignoring their original context altogether. Only a deliberately presentist appropriation of ancient texts will make them existentially meaningful to us. Yet this exercise is even more violent than the allegory practiced by ancient and humanist philologists […] (2011, 38).

Whereas Gadamer attempts to work through how conceptions from ancient thought evolve through time and up to our present, which means that we are never completely separate from prior viewpoints, for Hadot there is a wide gap between past and present. We might even say that he seems to see a historical text as a distant object that is external to us. In contrast, Gadamer's viewpoint involves a fusion between the past and present, a perspective that emphasizes the living metamorphosis of tradition. Force characterizes the

difference between Gadamer's and Hadot's approach to interpretation as follows:

> Gadamer's approach is accommodative. It involves a "mediation" between the ideas present in old texts and one's own thinking. Hadot, for his part, does not seem interested in seeking a middle ground. Translated into Gadamer's language, his position would consist in embracing absolute strangeness and absolute familiarity at the same time. (2011, 39)

However, Force goes on to note that "[t]his position may not be as idiosyncratic as it seems" (2011, 39), and points to the uniqueness of the "mystical dimension" to Hadot's approach, one which is the outcome of his emphasis on "philosophy as performance". Force points to how for Hadot "[…] philosophical texts matter less for what they *say* than what they *do*, [and] after we have elucidated what they say, we should let them transform us and change our perception of the world. Interpretation leads to silent meditation or contemplations" (2011, 39). For Hadot, the practical effects of philosophy as a practice is primary.

Nevertheless, this lack of mediation between past and present may lead to certain *aporias* in respect to how to draw upon tradition. For example, at the end of Hadot's book on Plotinus, *The Simplicity of Vision*, Hadot, although clearly inspired by the type of transcendence found within Plotinus's thought, points to the seventeen-century gap between Plotinus and ourselves and he writes that "[a]n immense abyss has opened up between us and him" (1998, 110). However, despite this separation, in some way he does think Plotinus can inspire us, as becomes evident when he goes on to remark that "[a]nd yet, when we read certain pages of the *Enneads*, something within us wakes up; an echo resounds in the depths of ourselves" (1998, 110). He later mentions that "[t]here can be no question of slavishly imitating the spiritual itinerary of Plotinus here in the late twentieth century; that would be impossible or illusory," which seems quite a reasonable viewpoint. He goes on to write that "[r]ather, we must consent, with as much courage as Plotinus did, to every dimension of human experience, and to everything within it that is mysterious, inexpressible, and transcendent" (1998, 113). To my mind, this view, like Hadot's exhortations to live according to reason seem rather underdetermined as to how it may be applied to present-day concerns.

Gadamer on the other hand retrieves aspects of Neo-Platonic thought, such as Plotinus' conception of emanation and applies it to his own linguistic viewpoint for present-day application (see Gadamer 2004).[69] Gadamer has developed Plotinus' viewpoint by relating it to language, but it is through doing this that he finds use and contemporaneity with Plotinus and his work speaks to us in the present. As Gadamer writes more generally, "[t]ime is no longer primarily a gulf to be bridged because it separates; it is actually the supportive ground of the course of events in which the present is rooted" (2004, 297). The mediation between strangeness and familiarity is a crucial aspect of Gadamer's hermeneutics.

Hadot's focus on practice and the experience itself is crucial for his conception of how ancient philosophy is relevant in a contemporary context. As we have pointed to previously he explains how he thinks modern humans can practice the spiritual exercises of ancient thought if they are separated from "the philosophical or mythic discourse which came along with them," as spiritual exercises can be justified by various discourses. He characterizes such discourses as "nothing but clumsy attempts, coming after the fact, to describe and justify inner experiences," and such experiences cannot be reduced to theories or systems (1995, 212). Hadot later says that, "it is therefore not necessary, in order to practice these exercises [exercises of transcendence derived from ancient philosophy], to believe in the Stoics' nature or universal reason. Rather, as one practices them, one lives concretely according to reason" (1995, 212). For Hadot, although he does not outline this in any detail, it would seem that living according to reason is an attempt at objectivity and universality,[70] which, if we seek inspiration from much of his reading of ancient thought and his understanding of interpretation, could be seen as a disinterested attempt to overcome subjective viewpoints which he seems to see as a mere distortion. On the one hand this may be problematic in a contemporary context with its appreciation for the perspectival and plural, but on the other hand it also may provide a refreshing viewpoint to counter present-day prejudices. However, I think we should at least consider the possible limitations of objectivity, as this should

[69] We will consider this further in Chapter 5 and 7.

[70] In Chapter 7 and 8 we will consider this question further and find that Hadot offers other viewpoints that are suggestive of a more fluid experience of universality.

to be addressed when considering practices in relation to present-day concerns.

For our purposes at this point, what I want to highlight is the problematic conception of an understanding of an object that is outside of and separate from the subject who is seeking to understand objectively by removing all prejudices**.** Orazio Irrera (2010), considering a distinction that Hadot makes between pleasure and joy in his interpretation of Stoic thought, suggests that there are theories of universality behind Hadot's perspectives:

> It seems […] that the notion of practices of 'practices of the self' or 'spiritual exercises' connected to the manifestation of joy and pleasure in this way pay tribute to specific doctrinal and theoretical contents. Hadot's strained attempt to include the concept of transcendence in order to conceive unitarily of performativity, of the therapeutic value of the entire philosophical discourse of antiquity, introduces in reality a *theory of universality as normative exteriority* in regard to consciousness. […] Ultimately, *in order to make the distinction of joy and pleasure work, it is necessary to anchor the notion of practice to theories that are prior and foundational to it*. (2010, 1008)

In Irrera's view, Hadot seems to be implicitly assuming the value of universal viewpoints of the type that are external to us. Although Hadot's account is participatory in that the experience of universality is not that of abstract thought but rather of self-transformation, this is seemingly a one-way relation where reason and universality impacts us, fostering transcendence. Indeed, this seems to reflect the same assumptions he makes about objective interpretation, where we need to extinguish our viewpoints. In this respect, if universality is important to contemporary application, as Hadot clearly thinks it is, even if we detach the ancient philosophical theory and discourses surrounding them, attempting to live a life of objectivity may still be problematic. Indeed, as we have indicated previously, Hadot recognizes that universal reason may not have much contemporary meaning. He even seems to tacitly acknowledge that objective interpretation is currently problematic as well when he notes the problems he encountered when trying have a book on interpretation by E. D. Hirsh, a thinker who emphasizes objective interpretation, translated: "It is clear that this book, which is in fact very nuanced, goes against the current of present fashion. Is this the reason it has never been translated into French, despite my efforts to have it translated? It leads one to believe that it is not only in Rome that there is an *Index* of prohibited books" (2011**,** 62). This is an example of how

Hadot feels that universality is under threat in present-day thought, which was pointed to in Chapter 1.

If objectivity in itself may be problematic, what I want to turn to now is to consider is how Gadamer may provide an account of universality and transcendence that may be more viable towards encouraging the type of universality that Hadot finds important for present-day concerns. In *Truth and Method*, Gadamer recognizes Heidegger's concerns about the problematic aspects of Greek thought:

> As I see it, in *Being and Time*, Heidegger attains a position from which both the differences and the similarities between Greek science and modern science can be considered. When he showed that the concept of presence-at-hand[71] is a deficient mode of being and viewed it as the background of classical metaphysics and its continuance in the modern concept of subjectivity, he was pursuing an ontologically correct connection between Greek *theoria* and modern science. (2004, 452)

Now, although Gadamer may not always be as deferential to Heidegger's viewpoint as this passage suggests, as he generally resists Heidegger's notion of philosophy since Plato being a forgetfulness of Being, the point here is that Gadamer recognizes that the type of objectivity found in Greek thought has contributed to the objective present-at-hand viewpoint of science.[72] So, in Gadamer's view, this type of objectivity and the scientific viewpoints that embody it are problematic and what he sees as their

[71] Presence-at-hand refers to an abstract experience of entities as objects outside of us to be explained, predicted, mastered and controlled.

[72] Heidegger's critique of the metaphysics of presence has been very influential in Continental thought. In this critique, Heidegger claims that Greek thought, beginning with Plato is forgetful of Being (as a formless presence), rather emphasizing being as a presence (e.g. Plato's Forms or we could even say static forms of Mind or Reason) which may be increasingly revealed with the goal of absolute clarity and removing all subjective viewpoints. According to Heidegger, these assumptions have insidiously led to scientific viewpoints of objectivity and technological mastery and control (see Grondin (2010) for a brief explanation of Heidegger's concerns with metaphysical presences). As discussed above, Irrera (2010) maintains that there are normative theories of objectivity underlying Hadot's universality and he remarks that "[t]his theorization introduces, […] a normative exteriority that rests on what Derrida would call the metaphysical thought of presence" (1014). Heidegger influenced Derrida's concern regarding the metaphysics of presence; see Thorsteinsson (2015).

excessive influence on the humanities is a crucial concern of this thought more generally.

Greek *theoria*, as we shall see in Chapter 6, is an experience of a heightened form of truth which has been associated with objectivity (we shall consider further in that chapter whether this is a fair assessment). Now, Gadamer goes on to point to a different aspect of *theoria* beyond objectivity as the passage continues:

> But in Greek theoria there was undoubtedly another element as well. Theoria grasps not so much the present-at-hand as the thing itself, which still has the dignity of a "thing". (2004, 452)

Gadamer goes on to explain that for the later Heidegger this experience of a thing is not that of something as present-at-hand like in the experimental sciences. Rather, he notes that we must maintain the "dignity of a thing" and keep our language "free from the prejudice originating in the ontology of the present-at-hand as well as in the concept of objectivity" (2004, 452). Here we can observe Gadamer's concern with objectivity generally. Now, the way that Gadamer attempts to retrieve a notion of transcendence and universality without falling into objectivity is through the experience of language and tradition, which we are within and they transcend each of us in a relational way. In this respect, when we approach tradition and texts and objects within it, these are not preformed universals, but rather potentials in wait of application into our present. For example, Gadamer states: "There is no being-in-itself that is increasingly revealed when Homer's *Iliad*, or Alexander's Indian Campaign speaks to us in the new appropriation of tradition; but, as in genuine dialogue, something emerges that is contained in neither of the partners by himself" (2004, 458). Here we can see how Gadamer is trying to get away from the idea of an objective presence that stands outside of us, pointing to a more relational and dynamic viewpoint. Now, this does not mean that there are no presences as there obviously is some type of presence as a text exists and it says something specific. We may certainly understand a text better or worse and some prejudices are better than others in that they follow the subject matter of a text and this may be interpreted in a plurality of ways within a certain scope. Although there is a movement towards universality and transcendence, the goal is not to shear all subjectivity away, but to remove those fore-conceptions that do not live up to the subject matter. In a sense, like Hadot, for Gadamer there is a virtue

in ‘objectivity,’ but this is not absolute; rather this is more participatory and co-creative. Thus, when Gadamer encounters the ‘objectivity’ or universality of a text or tradition, it is one in which we are taken out of ourselves and experience transcendence that resonates through the possibilities of language in its speculative dimensions and tradition, and then involves a return through which our interpretation is an application which participates in the ongoing flow of tradition. For Gadamer there is an inherent rationality and reason that runs through language and tradition, and reason here develops through conversations and acts of interpretation and is an emergent historical and ontological phenomenon.

Now, if we briefly turn to Hadot’s criticism of Foucault, one of his reproaches was Foucault’s understanding of Stoicism and Epicureanism as drawing upon the past writings of tradition in such a way that one picks and chooses in order to self-create a self through personal choice. In Hadot’s view, rather than it being the case, as he believes Foucault claims, that “the individual forges a spiritual identity for himself by writing down and re-reading disparate thoughts,” the task is “to liberate oneself from one’s individuality” (1995, 210). For Hadot, “[w]riting, like the other spiritual exercises, *changes the level of the self*, and universalizes it,” and this allows the person who practices this in solitude, “to accede to the universality of reason within the confines of space and time” (1995, 211). Here we see an example of Hadot’s concern with what he views as Foucault’s ‘Dandyism’ which fails to sufficiently consider transcendence, as discussed in Chapter 1.

Whatever merits there may be in Hadot’s concerns with Foucault’s position, I would suggest that such concerns do not apply to Gadamer. Although Gadamer may draw upon tradition as an authority and we choose between different aspects of tradition this is not a matter of self-creation, but rather it is an event that happens to us. This is a dynamic event of self-transcendence where from our own vantage point (or we could say limited reasonableness) we are taken up within the universality of tradition (which is reasonable in a more universal way). That is, we learn to live according to reason, which for Gadamer is a matter of the universality of reason as it is experienced historically playing itself out in the present, and this experience of reason is an event in which we undergo a shift in self-understanding. This is a movement of transcendence, which we could say “changes the level of self,” to use Hadot’s term, as one moves into the greater horizon of tradition.

Gadamer actually seems to accomplish much of what Hadot is intending here.

In summary, in the practice of interpretation Hadot has a stronger emphasis on appealing to authorial intent and objectivity than Gadamer and the attendant shift in self-understanding associated with this is potentially more radical in that it seemingly requires a complete detachment from all prejudices and subjective perspectives and an abandonment to the object of interpretation.[73] Gadamer likewise contends that texts may transform us, but there just isn't the gap between past and present that we find in Hadot's thought; rather, we participate in the ongoing evolution of language and tradition and can transcend ourselves thereby. This may be a less radical transposition than what Hadot is suggesting, but nevertheless it is an attempt to transcend oneself towards greater universality, and it also provides an avenue for mediation and the productive emergence of new perspectives through engaging with historical points of view.

Emerson: Creative Reading and Universality

Emerson was an avid reader and was inspired by a great many thinkers from both the Western tradition and outside of it; for example, he was influenced by Indian and Buddhist thought. However, for him the point of reading and engaging tradition is not to follow tradition, but for it to inspire us. Emerson's approach as found in "The American Scholar" points to a type of creative reading. Instead of emphasizing a relation to the subject matter like Gadamer or an attempt at an objective reading of the text such as Hadot, for Emerson we should rather take whatever suits us in supporting our own creative impetus and leave behind whatever does not. For example, Emerson in his 1844 essay "Nominalist and Realist" writes: "I think I have done well, if I have acquired a new word from a good author; and my business with him is to find my own, though it were only to melt him down to an epithet or an image for daily use" (1983, 583). However, this doesn't necessarily mean this process of extraction avoids the meaning of a text *per se*, but rather what is found valuable is being drawn on in a unique and creative way. Importantly, as Hadot points to, when one reads texts, in order "for their meaning to be understood, these truths [that they convey] must be *lived*, and

[73] In this respect, abandonment is also an important motif of Emerson, although so too is the creative process of expression. These will be explored in Chapter 4.

constantly re-experienced" (1995, 108). In this respect, Emerson certainly emphasizes the lived and experiential aspects of the process of reading. In a similar vein, for Hadot, reading is an important spiritual practice: "We have forgotten *how* to read; how to pause, liberate ourselves from our worries, return into ourselves, and leave aside our search for subtlety and originality, in order to mediate calmly, ruminate, and let the texts speak to us. This, too, is a spiritual exercise, and one of the most difficult" (1995, 109). However, for Emerson it is the taking up the part of a truth from a text that appeals to one and originality that is more important than explicitly following the text. For Emerson, what is original in a text is the impersonal and universal that comes forth through an author and which a reader may draw upon. In "The American Scholar" Emerson notes the pleasure one gets from reading the best books and remarks that "[t]hey impress us with the conviction, that one nature wrote and the same reads" (1983, 58).

We have seen that experiences of transcendence and universality are important for Gadamer and Hadot in respect to the experience of history and tradition, and this is also a prevalent theme in Emerson's thought. Emerson writes in his 1841 essay "History":

> There is one mind common to all individual men. Every man is an inlet to the same and to all of the same. He that is once admitted to the right of reason is made a freeman of the whole estate. What Plato has thought, he may think; what a saint has felt, he may feel; what at any time has befallen any man, he can understand. Who hath access to this universal mind is a party to all that is or can be done, for this is the only and sovereign agent. (1983, 237)

Here Emerson is pointing to the possibility of an experience of a more universal mind which all minds participate in. As he goes on to note, "[o]f the works of this mind history is the record" (1983, 237). For Emerson, we are a part of history and we can interpret that history. Emerson points to the possibility of strong participatory experience that we need to apply back to our own life, and the experience of history helps remedy "the defect of our too great nearness to ourselves. This throws our actions into perspective […] so I can see my own vices without heat in the distant persons of Solomon, Alcibiades, and Catiline" (1983, 238). Here we see the possibility for a connection to different points of history to attain some distance from ourselves so that we can change, a very Gadamerian sentiment. When Emerson goes on to write that "[i]t is the universal nature which gives worth

to particular men and things," and that "all laws derive hence their ultimate reason; all express more or less distinctly some command of this supreme, illimitable essence," we see the strong movement towards universality; however he also points to the value of individual experience when he remarks that "[w]e sympathize with these great moments of history" which are "*for us*, as we ourselves in that place would have done or applauded" (1983, 239). Here we can see his emphasis on experiences of universality applied to individual experience in order to effect practical change.

For Emerson there is a value in books from tradition, but they must be used the right way. In the essay "The American Scholar," Emerson writes that "[b]ooks are the best of things, well used; abused, among the worst" and that "[t]hey are for nothing but to inspire" (1983, 57).[74] In "History," Emerson points to how "[t]he student is to read history actively and not passively; to esteem his own life the text, and books the commentary" (1983, 239), which points to the strong emphasis he places on practical self-transformation. In this respect, whether we consider Hadot's viewpoint of objective interpretation, Gadamer's application, or Emerson's creative reading and experiences of universality, none of them want to fall into reading history abstractly, but rather all seek to apply reading and interpretation to one's own life in an active way.

Emerson wants us to be stimulated by books, but not in such a way that it takes us away from our own center as in his view we all have access to wisdom within. In Emerson's view, we are all creators, and in "The American Scholar" he writes that "genius looks forward; […] man hopes: genius creates" (1983, 58). Emerson maintains that "[o]ne must be an inventor to read well" (1983, 59) and later remarks that "[t]he discerning will read, in his Plato or Shakespeare, only that least part,—only the authentic utterances of the oracle;—all the rest he rejects" (1983, 59). Here I think we can see that Emerson does not have issues with tradition when it presents a truth; however, he thinks that this is quite unusual and so significant sifting needs to occur. In this respect, when we recall Gadamer's emphasis on eminent texts, this too involves sifting at a collective level as certain texts

[74] As mentioned previously, Emerson influenced Nietzsche, not least the latter's famous essay "On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life" (see Keane, 2005), and Nietzsche's essay certainly had some influence on Gadamer and Hadot. In this respect, therefore, we can trace an Emersonian influence on Gadamer and Hadot.

become unique, classic and exemplary texts and stand out against the rest of tradition. Richardson remarks that Emerson was "what American miners call a 'high-grader'—a person who goes through a mine and pockets only the richest lumps of ore" (2009, 8-9). Thus, the goal of reading is to grasp the most valuable and esteemed aspects that one finds in it. According to Richardson, taking from other writers to inspire oneself is an approach that Emerson learned from Goethe and was a vital aspect of *Bildung* (1995, 172). Richardson adds the clarification that "[s]uch appropriation does not mean, of course, that one adopts the ideas of others because one has no thoughts of one's own. It does mean that the individual must be free not only to have his own thoughts but to take up the thoughts of others when they coincide with, restate, or extend his own" (1995, 173). For Emerson, one draws upon another thinker based on how it strikes one in the creative process, and the point is not to retrace what someone else thought but rather how it may promote one's own creation.

Emerson radically and famously argues for original experience over tradition in *Nature*:

> Our age is retrospective. It builds the sepulchres of the fathers. It writes biographies, histories, and criticism. The foregoing generations beheld God and nature face to face; we, through their eyes. Why should not we also enjoy an original relation to the universe? Why should not we have a poetry and philosophy of insight and not of tradition, and a religion by revelation to us, and not the history of theirs? [...] The sun shines to-day also. There is more wool and flax in the fields. There are new lands, new men, new thoughts. Let us demand our own works and laws and worship. (1983, 7)

Quite clearly, Emerson's point is that we should not only rely on the accounts of others but rather encourage our own direct experience. This doesn't mean that tradition isn't of value, but it does point to the possibility of new and original experience and Emerson values direct experience and spiritual insight over what has been handed down to us from the past. The past provides a model as they had original experience, but rather than copying them, we too should we have original experience. In this respect, although he certainly would agree that there are classics of thought, as we can see from the passage below taken from "The American Scholar," he is concerned about idolatry and wishes to remind us of our own possibilities and that we too can find sources of genius within ourselves:

> Meek young men grow up in libraries, believing it their duty to accept the views, which Cicero, which Locke, which Bacon, have given, forgetful that Cicero, Locke, and Bacon were only young men in libraries, when they wrote these books.
>
> Hence, instead of Man Thinking, we have the bookworm. (1983, 57)

Thus, the prime concern of Emerson is that we learn to listen to ourselves and value our own experiences. Everyone is a searcher and we should learn to recognize that we all have the potential for valuable insight, which reflects the democratic emphasis of Emerson's thought. In Emerson's view, one's own intuition is the final arbiter: in this respect, Barbara Packer explains that for Emerson, "[e]ven those doctrines inherited from tradition must receive the assent of intuitive affirmation in order to be accepted by the subject" (1982, 36).

Thus, an important difference between Gadamer and Emerson is that the former emphasizes the importance of tradition for overcoming the limitations of one's preconceptions, whereas the latter, although certainly aware that one's own habitual perspectives could very well be limited, regards this as an inherent problem that extends to tradition itself.[75] Given this, Emerson seeks to contact a deeper source of intuition within oneself as an impersonal experience of a greater whole that can serves as an orientation against the possible distortions of custom and tradition. In this respect, he is certainly allied to the type of thinking Hadot points to in ancient thought that sought to overcome the distortion of ordinary life and ways of being through the experience of reason[76] and wisdom. Emerson certainly acknowledges that we draw upon prior tradition. For example, in the 1875 essay "Quotation and

[75] Habermas and Gadamer had a famous debate, which included concerns about the challenges of overcoming distortions within our tradition (see Porter and Robinson (2011) and Warnke (1987) for considerations of the debate and Habermas' and Gadamer's positions). One of Habermas' concerns was related to the systematic distortion that may occur within language and tradition, which he seeks to overcome through rational discourse and critical reflection. For Gadamer the event of understanding always happens in our engagement with language and tradition, but there is reason within tradition and in our dialogue with tradition and following the subject matter there is some discernment. As cited in Chapter 1, at the end of *Truth and Method* Gadamer writes of his approach as "a discipline of questioning and inquiring, a discipline that guarantees truth" (2004, 484), but it is not always clear how this is warranted, and in this respect, for example, how we may definitively discern between better and worse forms of tradition.

[76] Emerson's conception of reason will be explored in more detail in Chapter 4.

Originality," Emerson points to the "debt to tradition" and adds that "[a]ll minds quote," and he writes, "[i]f we confine ourselves to literature, 'tis easy to see that the debit is immense to past thought. None escapes it. The originals are not original" (*CW8,* 94).[77] However, originality is key for Emerson, as well as the need to hold fast to our own insight and be creative, as we see reflected in a passage from the same essay:

> To all that can be said of the preponderance of the Past, the single world Genius is a sufficient reply. The divine resides in the new. The divine never quotes, but is and creates. The profound apprehension of the Present is Genius, which makes the Past forgotten. And what is Originality? It is being, being oneself, and reporting accurately what we see and are. Genius is, in the first instance, sensibility, the capacity of receiving just impressions from the external world, and the power of co-ordinating these after the laws of thought. It implies Will, or original force for their right distribution and expression. If to this the sentiment of piety be added, if the thinker feel that the thought most strictly his own is not his own, and recognizes the perpetual suggestion of the Supreme Intellect, the oldest thoughts become new and fertile whilst he speaks them. (*CW8*, 105)

In this rich passage, we can see that Emerson prioritizes the new and the unfamiliar and links this with the divine and creation. Here Emerson is encouraging an attunement to the divine beyond history and facts. Physical matter and the factual is seen as an initial starting point, but far more important is the experience of the "Supreme Intellect" or Mind and he emphasizes the creative and fertile aspect of this process. The tension in Emerson's conceptions between receptivity and creativity will be considered in Chapter 4 and later chapters. What I wish to point to is that from the point of view of custom or tradition, Emerson is largely suspicious and seeks to move beyond it (except when it exhibits a spiritual truth), but from the point of view of Nature, Mind or reason, he is more accommodating and receptive. We might even say that we must 'die' to our individual and collective viewpoints in order to 'live' or be reborn into more profound viewpoints,

[77] This aspect of Emerson's thought would draw him closer to Gadamer understanding of application. See Greenham (2016a) for a consideration of the range of ways in which Emerson's thought has been understood in the critical tradition, from some readings that emphasize him as an original American thinker to others who emphasize his indebtedness to prior European thought. Greenham points to the influence of European thought on Emerson and characterizes him as a transatlantic thinker who adapted European thought in a unique and American way rather than a completely original thinker breaking with past tradition.

which perhaps may be seen as a form of the training for 'death' that Hadot points to. Hadot explains that "[t]o observe human affairs from above means, at the same time, to see them from the point of view of death. It is only this perspective which brings about the necessary elevation and loosening of the spirit, which can provide the distance we need in order to see things as they really are" (1995, 247), which, as we have seen, for Emerson may be experienced when we tap into the Mind or reason running through reality and when history reflects such truth. For both Emerson and Hadot, the lived experience of physics may help us overcome the distortions of tradition and everyday life, whether we view this as following a universal, a creative act of genius, or something in between. It should be kept in mind that although Emerson employs language that points to the eternal, this is meant to be applied in the here and now. For example, in the chapter "Worship" from *The Conduct of Life*, Emerson points to the need to seek meaning in the now rather than an afterlife: "Of immortality, the soul, when well employed, is incurious. It is so well, that it is sure it will be well" (1983, 1075). Although Emerson, like Gadamer, does not focus on death *per se*, I would likewise say that both of their approaches promote a series of smaller 'deaths' of our habitual viewpoints, whereby we open up to new possibilities in our lives.

For Emerson, genius and originality stem from listening deeply to oneself as we relate to universality and a greater whole, others, and the experience of nature,[78] which brings us back to ourselves. This is a process that moves beyond the personal towards more relational perspectives, a viewpoint consistent with Emerson's notion of self-reliance. This movement towards the universal and the whole, and how this dynamically relates back to one's concrete situation in a productive and creative way is a common element for both Gadamer and Emerson. However, each goes about this with different theoretical discourses and emphases. For Emerson, the universality in question is achieved through an experience of transcendence through the Mind and history, a form of metaphysical interconnection to a Higher Mind or soul that individuals participate in and which they dynamically co-evolve with. For Gadamer, something akin to this is achieved through language and tradition.

However, in Emerson's view, such insight can in a much stronger sense work directly against what is held within custom or tradition. In his

[78] The transcendent experience of nature will be explored further in later chapters.

discussion of the scholar in "The American Scholar," Emerson writes: "In the right state, he is, *Man Thinking*. In the degenerate state, when the victim of society, he tends to become a mere thinker, or, still worse, the parrot of other men's thinking" (1983, 54). This is a potential danger of a strong emphasis on tradition, which is why for Emerson, rather than thinking along pre-given forms of thought, he emphasizes that a thinker is dynamic and innovative. For Emerson there is no problem drawing upon the past and applying it in the present as long as we apply it to our own experience; as he writes in his essay "History": "So all that is said of the wise man by Stoic, or oriental or modern essayist, describes to each reader his own idea, describes his unattained but attainable self. All literature writes the character of the wise man" (1983, 239). The unattained but attainable self is something that we must continually work towards and invites the task of self-realization and way of life. For Emerson, representative men (great people of accomplishment) may inspire us and remind us of our own potential. In this respect, it should be noted that in Emerson's 1850 book *Representative Men* he outlines the positive aspects of six archetypal people he discusses, but also provides some pointed criticism, implying openness to their thought and thoughtful reflection, but not blind acceptance (see Emerson, 1983).

For Emerson, accounts of wisdom that are recorded in tradition may be brought forward and developed and improved. As he explains in his essay "Quotation and Originality," "[m]ythology is no man's work […] every talker helps a story in repeating it, until, at last from the slenderest filament of fact a good fable is constructed" (*CW8*, 95), and he also associates the same process of development with mythology, remarking that "the legend is tossed from believer to poet, from poet to believer,—everybody adding a grace or dropping a fault or rounding the form, until it gets an ideal truth" (*CW8*, 95). Here there is a productive growth that may occur as myths and legends evolve through history. Thus, tradition may be a positive placeholder for the development of truth that is collectively sustained and created, and we need to use the conventions of our times in our expressions, as, according to Emerson as he writes in "The American Scholar," "[e]ach age […] must write its own books; or rather, each generation for the next succeeding. The books of an older period will not fit this" (1983, 57). Emerson points to the use of history for the present in his essay "Works and Days": "The use of history is to give value to the present hour and its duty. That is good which commends to me my country, my climate, my means and materials, my

associates" (*CW7*, 89-90). As we have noted above, Emerson does maintain that material from ancient thought is relevant; what I think we may glean from this is that Emerson thinks that it is possible to have an affinity with other historical times because of the commonality of human Mind and experience, but that more recent expressions may be more amenable to present-day use. This is a key consideration in respect to utilizing ancient thought and the strong notions of universality found within it and why Gadamer and Emerson may be very helpful thinkers to help re-envisage universality and transcendence in a present-day context.

Although Emerson prioritizes the individual listening to and following oneself, as he explains in his 1860 essay "Success" from *Society and Solitude*, this may lead to communal benefit: "We know the Spirit by its victorious tone. […] Your theory is unimportant; but what new stock can you add to humanity, or how high you can carry life? A man is a man only as he makes life and nature happier to us" (*CW7*, 156).[79] Expressing one's intuition in words and sharing it with others is an important aspect of Emerson's thought. This is not a static process, but such expressions change tradition and open up different possibilities for others, and it is crucial for Emerson that one does not need to appeal to approval from others and priority is laid upon following one's own insight. Interestingly, for Gadamer, a literary or eminent text finds its truth within itself and resists common opinion: "The literary text is not 'right' because it says what anyone and everyone would have said but it has a new, unique kind of rightness that distinguishes it as a work of art" (1989b, 49). For both Emerson and Gadamer there are heightened forms of truth beyond the norm, but this is made much more explicit in Emerson's thought. In this respect, it should also be recalled that ancient philosophy involved a conversion of outlook beyond ordinary societal viewpoints towards wisdom, which also is a form of truth beyond the norm.

Practices of Interpretation and Creative Reading

Gadamer, Hadot, and Emerson give us three approaches towards interpreting and drawing upon history and tradition: application (Gadamer), objectivity (Hadot) and what I would conceive as originality/universality (Emerson).

[79] Here Emerson seems to run quite close to Hadot's emphasis on performance over theory.

However, what all three approaches share in common is that interpretation is an experiential process that fosters transcendence beyond our current viewpoints.

Gadamer's conception of application is an approach to interpretation where one attempts to stay true to the subject matter, which involves a relative distancing from our prejudices (although some will remain) and applying our interpretation back to our concrete situation. For Hadot, there is an attempt to completely break out of one's prejudices and encounter the work on its own terms, a process that encourages self-transformation. There also seems to be an associated process of moving past all the strictures of discourse and to just be led by the experience of the practice itself. Emerson's approach of originality engages tradition in order to be inspired and to help invigorate and remind oneself of one's own potential. It should be kept in mind that this potential is tapping into a greater whole and such is not a kind of 'Dandyism' as per Hadot's concerns about Foucault's thought, as experiences of universality play a key role for Emerson. As we have seen in respect to Emerson's notion of self-reliance, individual experience is connected to a greater whole, an experience of universality beyond oneself as viewed as a discrete subject. Tradition has value for Emerson, but the ultimate authority is oneself, and when we follow ourselves we can be of most both benefit to ourselves and make the greatest contribution to human society at large.

This brings us back to the point made in Chapter 2 when it was suggested that Gadamer emphasizes that we *could be wrong* and Emerson emphasizes that we *could be right*. At the margin of new experience, Emerson emphasizes stepping outside of tradition and bringing insight back into one's life and tradition, whereas Gadamer emphasizes staying within the tradition and how language and tradition can evolve and reveal different viewpoints. However, this does not preclude something coming from the outside. For example, when Gadamer famously writes that "*[b]eing that can be understood is language*" (2004, 470), this does not mean that there is nothing outside of language; rather, the experience of being must enter language in order to be understood. Seen in this way, an entry of a powerful new perspective could change language and expand the horizon of the collective tradition as well, or said another way, a dynamic new shift within language could foster a different revelation of being. In this sense, although Emerson emphasizes the freedom from tradition and creative possibility and

Gadamer the creative possibility and limitation within language and tradition, in practice, the actual process of change may be quite similar, albeit with different, but arguably complementary emphases. Whereas Emerson emphasizes the freedom and originality of a new thought, Gadamer emphasizes its mobile continuity with the past. The strength of Emerson's position is originality, but its potential weakness is that if it is completely ungrounded in relation to tradition it may become abstract, lost, and also potentially subject to delusion and individual caprice or it may miss the historical precedence and influence that has led to one's perspectives.[80] The strength of Gadamer's viewpoint is that the focus on tradition and collective agreement may help creatively draw upon the past as a source of truth, but the weakness is that this may tend to solidify into traditional forms of thought and conservatism, potentially limiting both critique and creativity.[81] Differentiating between Gadamer and Emerson is a matter of nuance, as for Gadamer, he is emphasizing the openness that is possible in a creative act within *the continuity* of tradition whereas for Emerson there a much greater focus on a *break with* the past, although I think in practice, for both, there is both a relation to and at least a relative break with the past. Both thinkers are dealing with the transition between the familiar and the new and unknown. In this respect, Hadot's viewpoint of objective interpretation seems to lead towards a 'conservative' form of interpretation, although this potentially encourages a radical transformation.

These may also be seen as three different but related models of transcendence, with each highlighting valuable aspects and fostering complementary practices that encourage self-transformation. Between Gadamer and Hadot, there is arguably a considerable 'grey area' between what is to be considered objectivity and what is an application, so I am

[80] Keane points to Emerson, along with Goethe, Nietzsche and Coleridge as prime examples of Thomas MacFarland's "paradox of originality," where the profound indebtedness of prior writers is accompanied by the "triumphant assertion" that the receiver is taking only what serves one as an act of genius and originality (2005, 8-9).

[81] John Caputo criticizes Gadamer's hermeneutics and its use of tradition from the perspective of deconstruction for its potential to suppress alternative viewpoints and explains: "[Deconstruction] has an idea that the tradition maintains itself in no small part by reason of its success in erasing the 'dangerous memory' of those who have questioned it. It is hard to assume a place in the tradition if one's books have been torched—or if one has not been taught to read or write in the first place" (1989, 263).

suggesting that there is a fluid range of possibility for interpretation and self-transformation. And likewise, between Gadamer and Emerson there is also arguably a considerable 'grey area' between what is considered to be an application and a creative reading (and Emerson's emphasis on universality also places him in proximity to both Gadamer and Hadot). Hermeneutics places a strong emphasis on the flexibility of thought and the range of objective interpretation to creative reading can be seen as different ways of promoting this flexibility, swinging on the one hand towards testing a text to break past our prejudices, and on the other hand also to selectively drawing upon it to inspire new perspectives.

Susan Roberson (1995) points to the commonality between Gadamer and Emerson in respect to how the process of interpreting a text is a dynamic interaction with our present situation, and she draws upon Gadamer's hermeneutic approach to consider the process of change in self-understanding that Emerson went through in composing his sermons and interpreting traditional texts. She explains that

> the meaning of these fundamental texts changes for Emerson as he comes to newer levels of self-understanding and experiences a "change of heart." […] The crucial text, "The kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:21) is just such a one, for in Emerson's hand, it becomes a personal and revolutionary text, and under the text's influence Emerson becomes a new being convinced of the divinity of his own nature. From his dialogue with this germinal text, a new meaning arises as he develops a philosophy of self-reliance that locates authority within the self and a new self-understanding as a potent member of the cosmos. (1995, 19)

In this transition from the God within to self-reliance, there is a serious engagement with a text that on Roberson's account inspired Emerson to interpret such texts in new ways, a process that reflected the concrete situation he was in. As we may recall from Gadamer's conception of application, the universality of a text is dynamically related back to our concrete situation, and, like a law, may be improved by bringing forward the spirit of the law, an act which is potentially productive for both self-understanding and tradition itself. In this respect, we could say that Emerson's conception of self-reliance may revitalize the more ancient Christian notion of the Kingdom of God is within and perhaps we might also suggest it does the same to the ancient conception of becoming like God as found in Plato and Plotinus (which we will consider in Chapter 6).

As per Gadamer, past viewpoints are contemporaneous with us and we bring them to life in new ways. In this sense, in terms of considering how ancient philosophy may be related to our contemporary context, we could say that Gadamer and Emerson embody such viewpoints and have 'translated' them for us, while also acknowledging the need to 're-translate' this anew and re-inscribe this further both within our own self-understanding and tradition as is moves forward. Roberson explores how the process Emerson underwent while creating his sermons contributed to his self-transformation, and in this respect draws parallels with Gadamer's hermeneutics:

> Emerson's hermeneutical project in the sermons is thus twofold: to uncover the meaning of texts through a conscious methodology, and to project a new self through the fusion of his present situation with the horizon of the text in an unceasing hermeneutical circle in which understanding changes and becomes more self-conscious. (1995, 20)

Here Emerson's sermons and autobiographical accounts are seen as expressions of the process of self-transformation going on within him and how this involved the creation of a new self. In this respect, the interpretation of texts and how they emerge in new creative forms and the transformation one undergoes in this process can be seen as an important practice of philosophy as a way of life in a contemporary context, whether we consider this as objective interpretation, application, or creative reading. Interpretation is a re-inscription of our self-understanding, and in this respect, the forms that this may take such as writing may also be seen as spiritual practices. This will be considered further in Chapter 4.

One final point that I will make is that although Roberson draws upon Gadamer's viewpoint to explain the process of transformation that Emerson underwent, when it comes to exploring Emerson for the purposes of her research, she draws upon an older hermeneutic approach:

> My method is hermeneutical in the old, historical sense, for I attempt to re-create the original situation by bringing together Emerson's homiletic text and the cultural and person texts that provided him means and motivation for interpretation and self-transformation. While I certainly have come to some degree of self-understanding during this project of interpretation, my personal insight is not of interest here; it is Emerson's encounter with himself that concerns me. (1995, 22)

Here the point is to attempt to objectively describe the original situation as a valuable approach to historical research.[82] Given that openness is such a hermeneutic 'virtue' an important aspect of this is maintaining an openness to different philosophical positions, and I think that how Robinson finds value in both Gadamer's and more objective approaches to interpretation is a nice example of this. As I have discussed above, I would tend to point to the value of seeing the complementary possibilities of Hadot's more objective and Gadamer's more dynamic and Emerson's creative and universal perspectives. In this respect, cultivating a flexibility of interpretative approaches and engaging in the experience of interpretation inspired by these different viewpoints may be seen as a philosophical practice.

[82] And it should also be recalled that in Hadot's view the effort of objective interpretation may lead to self-transformation.

Chapter 4 – Receptivity, Creativity, and Optimism in Emerson's Thought

This chapter explores the distinction Emerson makes between reason and understanding, or intuitive and discursive thought. The importance of both receptivity and creativity for Emerson is explored, and it will be considered how Emerson's viewpoints both draw upon ancient philosophical perspectives and incorporate greater emphasis on creativity. Emerson is well-known for the prevalent optimism of his writings, and we will explore the role that optimism plays in Emerson's thought. Potential practices to encourage self-transformation will be drawn from Emerson's works and it will be discussed how these may be incorporated as a way of life for present-day application.

Reason, Understanding, and Receptivity

An important distinction Emerson makes is between "reason" and "understanding," and in this respect Emerson is influenced by Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Thomas Carlyle, thinkers who, in turn, were influenced by Neo-Platonism, Romanticism and German Idealism.[83] For Emerson, reason is related to direct intuition and heightened experience, whereas understanding is calculative, discursive, and based on ordinary experience. Emerson explains that "Reason is the highest faculty of the soul—what we mean often by the soul itself; it never *reasons*, never proves, it simply perceives; it is vision" (1997, 133). Reason should not be diminished by converting it into a framework of understanding; as he puts it in "The Divinity School Address," "[t]here is no doctrine of the Reason which will bear to be taught by the Understanding," (1983, 80). Elsewhere, i.e. in his

[83] See Greenham (2012) who focusses on the influence of Coleridge and Carlyle on Emerson's distinction between the Reason and Understanding. Keane (2005) points to the influence of Coleridge on Emerson, as well as influences such as Plato, Plotinus and Neo-Platonism, Milton and German Idealism which influenced Coleridge. Emerson was influenced by Neo-Platonism directly and indirectly through thinkers such as Coleridge, Goethe, Cudworth and, through Romanticism and German Idealism, by Neo-Platonism.

essay “Intellect,” Emerson points to “the superiority of the spontaneous or intuitive principle over the arithmetical or logical” (1983, 419). Here we can see Emerson’s concern that intensified ways of experiencing the world may be curtailed if we fall into our ordinary ways of experiencing the world and our habitual judgments. Although Emerson certainly finds value in rational understanding, he prioritizes the experience of reason.

The understanding is related to space, time and materiality, whereas reason relates to the eternal and to receptive and revelatory experience. Emerson writes in *Nature*:

> Man is conscious of a universal soul within or behind his individual life, wherein, as in a firmament, the natures of Justice, Truth, Love, Freedom, arise and shine. This universal soul, he calls Reason: it is not mine, or thine, or his, but we are its; we are its property and men. And the blue sky in which the private earth is buried, the sky with its eternal calm, and full of everlasting orbs, is the type of Reason. (1983, 21)

There is a strong dimension of universality in this conception of reason, as it is not ours or another’s and that it runs through nature. For Emerson, reason is a unifier that surpasses the dualism of self and other, subject and object, and humans and nature, whereas the understanding and rationality relate to social customs and ‘ordinary’ ways of experiencing the world. In this respect, it is worth bearing in mind that Hadot points to the importance of living according to universal reason in ancient thought and how the philosophical life differed from that of non-philosophers. For example, as mentioned in Chapter 1, Hadot explains that all the ancient philosophical schools (except Skepticism) encouraged overcoming social conventions and the desires of the body through experiencing more universal viewpoints and seeing social life from the points of view of universality and nature. Hadot points to the importance of an experience which he characterizes as an exterior movement through which “one rises to a higher psychic level” in which “one no longer lives in the usual, conventional human world, but in the world of nature,” (1995, 211), which is a spiritual exercise. As Hadot writes in respect to ancient thought, “philosophy signified the attempt to raise up mankind from individuality and particularity to universality and objectivity” (1995, 242). He also explains that “[f]or the Stoics, philosophical death consisted in putting oneself in accord with universal reason, the all-embracing Logos, both interior and exterior” (1995, 242). The

Logos for the Stoics is reason as it runs through reality, both within us and outer nature, and for Plato, the Forms serve as the paradigm of which material reality is a copy of and participates in and our rational faculty has an affinity to these Forms.[84] We can see from this that what Emerson means by Reason resonates with ancient conceptions of universality and universal reason.[85] It should be kept in mind, as was pointed out in Chapter 1, that for the ancient Greeks reason or mind is more than just rationality and relates to the Divine. In respect to Plotinus (a Neo-Platonist who is particularly important to consider here due to his influence on Emerson, both direct and indirect), he points to a level of the soul that is limited to rational knowledge and a more profound experience of Intellect or Mind through which we may experience the highest part of ourselves. Plotinus characterizes an experience of the Intellect in contrast to the rational soul that is limited to discursiveness:

> Its knowing is not by search but by possession, its blessedness inherent, not acquired; for all belongs to it eternally and it holds the authentic Eternity imitated by Time which, circling round the Soul, makes towards the new thing and passes by the old. Soul deals with thing after thing – now Socrates; now a horse: always some one entity from among beings – but the Intellectual-Principle is all and therefore its entire content is simultaneously present in that identity: this is pure being in eternal actuality; nowhere is there any future, for every then is a now; nor is there any past, for nothing there has ever ceased to be; everything has taken its stand for ever, an identity well pleased, we might say, to be as it is […]. (1991, 351, V.1.4)

Here we find a historical precedent for the type of distinction that Emerson makes between reason and understanding, and here the experience of what Plotinus' calls the Intellectual-Principle is a more direct and participatory experience that transcends time and discursive assumptions about reality. For both ancient thinkers and Emerson, as we shall see in Chapters 6 and 7, an important spiritual exercise consists in aligning

[84] Hadot writes in respect to the Stoics that the discipline of desire [the attempt to renounce desire and align oneself with universal reason], although seemingly separated from physics, is a type of applied physics and spiritual exercise when it is engaged with a lived attitude (see Hadot 1995, 194-95). He writes: "In order to discipline their desires, people need to be intensely conscious of the fact that they are a part of the cosmos, they must replace each event within the perspective of universal nature" (1995, 195).

[85] This will be explored and developed further in Chapter 6 and 7.

ourselves to the *Logos*, Mind or Intellect running through reality and this is a practice in physics; for Plato and Plotinus this is characterized as a process of becoming Godlike. When Emerson writes in "Self-Reliance" that "[t]he soul raised over passion beholds identity and eternal causation, perceives the self-existence of Truth and Right, and calms itself with knowing that all things go well" (1983, 271), this is clearly akin to the type of universality in ancient thought that Hadot points to and the tranquillity that the experience of such universality may promote. Although I would not want to equate Emerson's understanding of reason with such viewpoints in ancient thought, there is clearly a significant parallel between these perspectives; for now, it is enough to observe that with Emerson there is an indication of a stronger creative component, and this will be explored further below and in later chapters.

Reason for Emerson is a form of intuitive insight with a strong emphasis on the receptive and on sudden influx. For example, in his essay "Intellect," Emerson asks: "What am I? What has my will done to make me that I am? Nothing. I have been floated into this thought, this hour, this connection of events, by secret currents of might and mind, and my ingenuity and wilfulness have not thwarted, have not aided to an appreciable degree" (1983, 418). This intuitive experience is not something that we control, but rather something that happens to us, as "[o]ur thinking is a pious reception" (1983, 418-419) and it is something we receive in its purity: "[T]he moment we cease to report, and attempt to correct and contrive, it is not truth" (1983, 419). In Emerson's view, every person has a different path to receptive experience, as "God enters by a private door into every individual" (1983, 418) and "[e]ach mind has its own method" (1983, 419). This points to an importance for an individual approach to receptive experience, but we should recall from our discussions in Chapter 2 and 3 that individual experience is an entry point that leads towards universality; as Emerson writes, "[t]he intellect goes out of the individual, floats over its own personality, and regards it as a fact, and not as *I* and *mine*" (1983, 417). From this viewpoint, an experience of reason or Mind is a stepping out of oneself and abandoning oneself to spontaneous experience, an experience of radical participation as an experience of universality that encourages breaking past habitual discursive thought.

For Emerson the experience of transcendence and universality is achieved through receptivity, where we are open to the influx of the Intellect,

Over-soul, or the One.[86] In order to help understand these terms, it is useful to briefly turn to Plotinus distinction between different levels of reality. For Plotinus, there are three basic levels of reality, the One, the Intellect, and the Soul, moving from perfect unity outward to greater multiplicity and materiality. The One is beyond the reach of human thought or language. A. H. Armstrong explains that the One is not "a mere negation, an ultimate Void" but is "a very positive Reality of infinite power and content and superabundant excellence" (1953, 31). The One is beyond being, beyond individual and even the sum of all beings, is formless, but is the source of all, and Armstrong explains that "Plotinus by his use of negative language stresses the transcendence of the One to an extreme degree" (1953, 32). Further, he notes that "[t]he One is not a God 'outside' the world […]. Nor is He remote from us, but intimately present in the centre of our souls; or rather we are in Him, for Plotinus prefers to speak of the lower as in the higher rather than the other way around," and he later remarks that "[a]nd just because the One is not any particular thing He is present to all things according to their capacity to receive Him" (1953, 32-33). From out of the One proceed what Plotinus calls Intellect (*Nous* or the Divine Mind or Forms/Ideas). These are the eternal archetypes. Soul proceeds from *Nous* and the material universe proceeds from the Soul. Everything proceeds out from

[86] We find all three of these terms in Emerson's essay "The Over-Soul" and they find parallels with Plotinus' thought. Briefly (and we shall expand on this further below), the One is a dynamic formless presence, the Intellect as a form of higher Mind, and the Over-soul is a form of heightened collective experience that mediates particulars with the level of Intellect and has affinities to Plotinus' understanding of the soul and world soul. See Bregman (1990) for a consideration of Neo-Platonic influence on Emerson's and American thought more generally. Bregman writes: "The Transcendentalists themselves were the source and impetus of a Romantic revival of Neoplatonism in North America" (1990, 99). Bregman also explains that "Emerson in certain moods, and his friend A. Bronson Alcott (1799-1888) somewhat more consistently, affirmed the human soul's connection with the *noetic* world, which they sometimes identified with the three Neoplatonic hypostases, '…that Unity, that Over-Soul, …the Eternal One.' If we 'telescope' the hypostases (as e.g. Porphyry [a prominent student of Plotinus and influential Neo-Platonist] often did) and see them as *three* functions or powers of one divine spirit, we will be close to Emerson's vision" (1990, 101). See Brodwin (1974) for the influence of Plotinus' conception of beauty on Emerson's thought. Vivian Hopkins writes: "The Neoplatonists, […] especially Plotinus, had a strong and decisive influence on Emerson's thought, and Emerson first discovered direct quotations from Plotinus, Proclus, and Iamblichus in Cudworth [Ralph Cudworth's book *The True Intellectual System of the Universe*]" (1951, 82).

the One but the One is undiminished and unchanged. Important to our discussion is that it is only at the lower levels of soul and matter that physical space and time plays a role; that is, in the intelligible realm there is far more interconnection and unity than is apparent at the lower levels. According to Plotinus, we must learn to turn our attention inward and upward towards the intelligible, and there is increasing unity at the higher levels of intelligibility. As Eyjólfur Emilsson explains, "the notion of unity […] is indeed a very central notion in Plotinus—*the* key notion, we might even say. […] Plotinus' world is stratified according to degrees of unity and plurality: souls have a higher degree of unity than bodies and bodies themselves have a higher degree of unity than the matter that underlies them" (2017, 45). Likewise, when Emerson points to the priority of reason over understanding, the more unified perspective of reason is something we need to learn to attune to. This has an active component; as Greenham maintains in respect the receptive experience of the Over-Soul, "[t]hat which seems passivity […] is in fact activity, the bringing about of a fundamental change and a reorientation from understanding to reason, from the not-me to the me and beyond to that in which they are held" (2012, 101). This is a shift in orientation from the limitations of the understanding and its division into the me and not-me towards more unified perspectives, whether this is conceived of in terms of the Over-soul or reason.

We may work towards cultivating an attunement to reason and releasing past habits that may inhibit this and transform our lives in this process. In Hadot's account of experiencing more universal and relational experiences in ancient thought, he points to different levels of the self and the self-transcendence that this involves (Hadot 1995, 2004). Hadot notes a distinction that Plotinus makes between "knowledge of self as rational soul which depends on the Intellect but remains on the plane of Reason, and, on the other, self-consciousness as the process of self becoming Intellect" (2004, 165), a process of tearing away from one's human aspects towards the highest part of the soul. Hadot explains that "'[t]he self then discovers that what is highest within the soul is Intellect and Spirit, and that, unconscious, it constantly lives from the life of the Intellect" (2004, 165). Likewise, for Emerson, the Intellect and Over-soul are not something found far away and outside of us, but indeed are our own Divine potentials that we are not

currently fully conscious of.[87] That is, there is a movement beyond discursive thought and the understanding and its separation into subject and object, towards an attunement to and a participation with a more fundamental unity that surpasses these distinctions. For Emerson the awaiting and openness to transcendence is crucial, and when Hadot cites Plotinus, I think Plotinus' words could equally apply to Emerson:

> It is as with a person waiting for a voice which he wishes to hear: he sets aside all other sounds and turns his ear toward the best of sounds, in order to hear it approaching. In the same way, we must leave aside the noises which come from the sensible world, unless they are necessary, in order to keep the soul's conscious power pure and ready to hear the sounds from above. (2004, 165, citing from Plotinus *Enneads* V, 1 (10), 12, 14)

Here the importance for receptivity is evident. What we have seen above is that Emerson employs a variety of terms that are related,[88] but the One generally points towards an experience of a formless presence, whereas reason or Intellect point to a Form or Principle some sort, and soul or Over-soul draws upon both of these conceptions with a connection to plurality.[89]

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[87] See Goodman (1997) in respect to the influence of Neo-Platonism on Emerson's thought.

[88] Shannon Mariotti explains that Emerson utilizes a variety of terms to indicate "another ideal realm that exists beyond the material world: this is the realm that, in Emerson's writings, variously goes under the name of Universal Spirit, Universal Mind, Consciousness, Genius, Aboriginal Self, Over-Soul, Spiritual Laws, Reason, or God. When we can see into this realm, we realize the superficiality of the material world, come into contact with a deeper reality, and are inspired to undertake the kind of nonconformist, independent, and truly individual action that embodies Emerson's practice of self-reliance" (2014, 306).

[89] For example, in the essay "The Over-Soul," Emerson writes: "We live in succession, in division, in parts, in particles. Meantime within man is the soul of the whole; the wise silence; the universal beauty, to which every part and particle is equally related; the eternal ONE. And this deep power in which we exist, and whose beatitude is all accessible to us, is not only self-sufficing and perfect in every hour, but the act of seeing and the thing seen, the seer and the spectacle, the subject and the object, are one" (1983, 386). Here we can see a consideration of plurality but also an emphasis on interconnection where the terminology of soul and the One are both used. In respect to Emerson's understanding of soul, David Robinson writes that "Emerson hoped to mediate the tension between will and reception though a doctrine of the soul. Will was, in a larger frame of reference, the mode of action in human history; grace suggested the transhistorical qualities of the Self. The soul allowed Emerson to bridge these concepts, bringing the transcendent into history and historicizing the universal. The concept suggested simultaneously the most intimate and unique aspects of the individual personality, and the decisive presence of a universal or transpersonal force within the individual" (2008, 31).

In this respect, Plotinus' three hypostases of One, Intellect, and Soul may be useful framework to help conceive the transition from the discursive understanding towards the intuitive experience of reason that incorporates heightened experience

Although the receptive element of Emerson's thought is important, so too is what he calls the intellect constructive, or the active intellect as the process of expressing these experiences. Emerson writes in the essay "Intellect" that "[t]o genius must always go two gifts, the thought and the publication" (1983, 422). To express revelatory insight, the natural forms experienced in nature are used, as "[t]o be communicable, […] [an insight] must become picture or sensible object. We must learn the language of facts" and "[w]hen the spiritual energy is directed on something outward, then it is a thought" (1983, 422). There is a transition from the receptivity of the receptive intellect towards creative expression, where appropriate forms and mediums are worked through. Expression is important for Emerson, as reflected by his words from the 1844 essay "The Poet," that "all men live by truth, and stand in need of expression" (448), and one can tap into a public power to aid in this expression:

> It is a secret which every intellectual man quickly learns, that, beyond the energy of his possessed and conscious intellect, he is capable of a new energy (as of an intellect doubled on itself), by abandonment to the nature of things; that, beside his privacy of power as an individual man, there is a great public power, on which he can draw, by unlocking, at all risks, his human doors, and suffering[90] the ethereal tides to roll and circulate through him: then he is caught up into the life of the Universe, his speech is thunder, his thought is law, and his words are universally intelligible as the plants and animals. (1983, 459)

Receptive experience then flows through into outer expression, where the Divine or our divine potential streams through us into the here and now. Here we seem to be taken up in this stream and moved along, an experience

[90] In *Truth and Method*, Gadamer discusses how he draws upon the Greek dialectic because the ancient Greeks "did not conceive understanding as a methodic activity of the subject, but as something that the thing itself does and which thought 'suffers'" (2004, 469). Here we find a significant commonality between Gadamer and Emerson and ancient Greek thought, where thought (or the experience of language which Gadamer emphasizes) is something that we 'suffer' through, something that occurs and happens to us rather than something we control as a subject.

of relationality and power where the finite human seems almost washed away. In the essay "Intellect," Emerson also describes a state in between spontaneous experience and expression:

> The thought of genius is spontaneous; but the power of picture or expression, in the most enriched and flowing nature, implies a mixture of will, a certain control over the spontaneous states, without which no production is possible. It is a conversion of all nature into the rhetoric of thought, under the eye of judgment, with a strenuous exercise of choice. And yet the imaginative vocabulary seems to be spontaneous also. It does not flow from experience only or mainly, but from a richer source. Not by any conscious imitation of particular forms are the grand strokes of the painter executed, but by repairing to the fountain-head of all forms in his mind. (1983, 423)

The artist, thinker, or speaker seems to be able to manage an in-between state between the influx of creative impetus and the tangible forms that she is creating with, but Emerson makes it clear that the most important aspect involved here consists in tapping into this spontaneous insight and the fountainhead behind all forms. Within Plotinus' understanding of the levels of reality, this would be an experience of the One.

Hadot associates the experience of the One with mystical experience and writes: "Plotinus tells us, the Spirit is 'drunk with love,' 'drunk on nectar,' and 'flourishes in enjoyment'" (2004, 168). Emerson writes in his essay "The Poet":

> The poet knows that he speaks adequately […] only when he speaks somewhat wildly, or, "with the flower of the mind;" not with the intellect, used as an organ, but with the intellect released from all service, and suffered to take its direction from its celestial life; or, as the ancients were wont to express themselves, not with intellect alone, but with the intellect inebriated by nectar. (1983, 459-460)

Here we can see a clear parallel between what Hadot and Emerson describe as an experience beyond all form. Hadot characterizes this experience as follows: "It is to situate ourselves at the point of origin where all things emanate from the good—this being none other than the point at which the Intellect is born" (2004, 168). This would seem to be at the inception point at which the structure of Reality emerges out the formless presence of the One.

In Emerson's late essay from 1872, "Poetry and Imagination," in a section headed "Creation," he considers "a […] step which poetry takes, and which seems higher than the others, namely, creation, or ideas taking forms of their own,—when the poet invents the fable, and invents the language which his heroes speak" (*CW8*, 20). Here we see a creative component to the poetic process. Now, in this process, Emerson explains there is a demand for veracity as the poet is "the law-giver […] an exact reporter of the essential law. He knows that he did not make his thought,—no, his thought made him, and made the sun and the stars" (*CW8*, 21). This would seem to have strong parallels with notions of universal reason as being a purely receptive experience of truth in ancient thought. However, Emerson goes on to describe the elevation of the poet to a higher level of experience than ordinary material concerns and labor, which includes a creative element:

> Now at this rare elevation above his usual sphere, he has come into new circulations, the marrow of the world is in his bones, the opulence of forms begins to pour into his intellect, and he is permitted to dip his brush into the old paint-pot with which birds, flowers, the human cheek, the living rock, the broad landscape, the ocean, and the eternal sky were painted. (*CW8*, 21)

Here the Poet seems to move past only an obedience to existing forms and ideas and participates in both the existing forms and the "paint-pot" that makes them. Put another way, we could say at the point where the Forms emerge from the One or the Good that for Emerson there is some kind of co-creative element that one does not find in ancient thought. Here Emerson could be interpreted not only a viewer of a pre-existing reason or Form or something that seems purely predestined in its development but is pointing to becoming a creator. This is an important difference between conceptions in ancient thought of pre-formed universals and the more creative elements that Emerson could be interpreted as incorporating into this thought. Emerson's 'modern' twist on ancient philosophical viewpoints is a creative element, whether this is under the auspices of reason, the Over-soul, or other terms such as the One, Mind, or Soul.

Now, this does not imply indiscriminate creation. Emerson writes that "[t]he poet is enamoured of thoughts and laws," which again indicate that whatever creation there is, it is not merely arbitrary, and, indeed, "[t]hese know their way, and, guided by them, he is ascending from an interest in visible things to an interest in that which they signify, and from the part of a

spectator to the part of a maker" (*CW8*, 22). Here, the poet makes a transition from being merely receptive and obeying to actual creation. As Goodman writes in respect to the nominalist position that Emerson outlines in the essay "Nominalism and Realism," "Emerson's joyful nominalist finds divinity in the perfectly developed moment, in something that never existed before, not simply in a return to something already complete. In this way he breaks with the Neoplatonic tradition, of which he is also a part" (2010, 53).[91]

For Emerson, receptivity and creativity go hand-in-hand, and there is both an influx of insight and expression of dynamic creation in this process. According to Emerson, we all to have a capacity to do this, although in the essay "The Poet," he points to how the artist has the particular ability to bring this to material fruition in a work of art through her talent to receive and express the influx of insight and creatively develop it into a specific form. Considering intuitive insight more broadly as reason and intellect, once we understand that for Emerson this consists of both receiving and poetic making, it is arguable that we are no longer dealing with reason or the Forms of the Intellect merely as objective presences, rather they are something

[91] M. H. Abrams (1973) points to the influence of Neo-Platonism on Romantic thought and notes that Romantic and post-Kantian viewpoints differed from the Neo-Platonists, firstly by transferring value from "the Plotinian other-realm to this world of man and nature and human experience," to improving life as it is lived here; and secondly, through the fact that "the most representative Romantic version of emanation and return, when the process reverts to its beginning the recovered unity is not, as in the school of Plotinus, the simple, undifferentiated unity of its origin, but a unity which is higher, because it incorporates the intervening differentiations," which "fuses the idea of the circular return with the idea of linear progress," exemplified by the Romantic image of a spiral (1973, 183-4). Thus, there is a movement towards a greater harmony than what was lost that must be striven towards and there is a value in diversity and individuality. Abrams explains that the system-philosophy of post-Kantian thinkers, rather than having "the metaphysical structures of most of their great predecessors," whose systems had "been composed of fixed concepts ordered by rational connections into a stable structure of enduring truths. […] is itself represented as a *moving* system, a dynamic process which is driven by an internal source of motion to its own completion" (1973, 172-173). This type of dynamic movement distinguishes modern philosophical conceptions from ancient ones and this movement is reflected in Gadamer's and Emerson's thought. Of note, Gadamer was strongly influenced by Hegel and influenced by Romanticism more generally. From these considerations we can see both the influence of Plotinus on Emerson both direct and indirect, and the modifications such influence takes as it runs through Romanticism and other thinkers towards more grounded, practical and creative forms.

creatively formed through their acts of interpretation and expression.[92] Indeed, let us recall our discussion in Chapter 3 with respect to how Gadamer explains his understanding of tradition as something other than preformed presences and that when we experience tradition and language it is something that transcends ourselves and is creative and productive interpretation of something new. For example, when we engage tradition or law according to Gadamer, we do not merely find something preformed, but rather we bring to bear a creative component to interpretation. In respect to Emerson, we could say that in artistic creation or original thought, when one experiences reality one further extends and develops it, not unlike Gadamer's legal example of applying the spirit of the law rather than merely recapitulating the letter of the law. Furthermore, if for Emerson the Poet or Man Thinking[93] contributes to reality through his creations, then, not unlike how Gadamer points to how we participate in the ongoing process of tradition and language and contribute to its growth, with Emerson one could say that nature and the reason that runs through it are a kind of tradition or 'Tradition'.[94] This 'Tradition'[95] is one which provides us with wisdom, but

[92] If and how much creative impetus would be a matter for interpretative debate.

[93] "Man Thinking" is a term Emerson coins in the essay "The American Scholar" for the dynamic, original and spiritually attuned thinker.

[94] This 'Tradition' will cut against the empty customs of tradition; as Greenham writes in respect to the Over-soul, "for Emerson obedience to the over-soul is all, and obedience is not straightforwardly passive; obedience is the highest form of activity because it must cut against many traditions and accepted practices; as such it is the grandest of reforms" (2012, 101).

[95] When Emerson writes in his essay "The Over-Soul" that "the only prophet of that which must be, is that great nature in which we rest, as the earth lies in the soft arms of the atmosphere; that Unity, that Over-soul, within which every man's particular being is contained and made one with all other; that common heart" (1983, 385-86) this sounds similar to the encompassing role of tradition and language for Gadamer, but here including physics and metaphysics. Just as much as for Gadamer, such a 'tradition' takes us out of our vagaries towards more universal experience; as Emerson writes, "that overpowering reality […] confutes our tricks and talents and constrains every one to pass for what he is," and encourages "wisdom, and virtue, and power and beauty" (1983, 386). Nevertheless, for Emerson this process is far more metaphysical, robust, and teleological: "I am born into the great, the universal mind. I, the imperfect, adore my own Perfect. I am somehow receptive of the great soul […]" (1983, 400). For Emerson, that there is a transition from a "spotted life of shreds and patches, […] to live with a divine unity" (1983, 400). However, it should be noted that in the same essay Emerson acknowledges that heightened experiences will only be experienced momentarily, and his later work generally emphasizes the challenges

this is not such that is completely pre-formed (e.g. like Plato's Forms as they are traditionally interpreted as permanent and eternal or *Logos* or Reason that is pre-determined teleologically as fate as per the Stoics). In places Emerson does point to absolute laws (which is a commonality with ancient viewpoints), so there is tension here in his thought and a matter of ambiguity as to the extent of creative freedom in his thought. In this respect, more generally my effort to think through the type of dynamic movement that is more readily found in association with Emerson's poetic thought in relation to his metaphysics is an interpretation that attempts to play out these tensions. Depending on which aspects of Emerson's thought one may give priority to, this attempt could also rather be seen as an application in Gadamer's sense of the term, an interpretive effort that attempts to stays true to the subject matter but also creatively extends it in some way. This having been said, given the wide scope of contemporary interpretation of Emerson, I believe my interpretive effort lies well within the bounds of reasonable interpretation, but I draw attention to this interpretive ambiguity given the discussion in Chapter 3 in respect to Hadot's emphasis on objective interpretation and Gadamer's understanding of application and the grey area and tension that exists in interpretation between these two viewpoints. What I am suggesting is that for Emerson the experience of universality is something that both transcends ourselves and we contribute to its ongoing development. Although this contribution may only be something modest, perhaps even the proverbial drop in the ocean, it provides an important element of creative contribution. Likewise, for Gadamer the type of creative contribution to tradition and language that takes place through interpretation and conversation would generally be quite modest.

At this point, what I want to suggest in general outline is that Gadamer and Emerson provide an account of transcendence and universality that have commonalities. Gadamer works this out through an ontology of language and

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and consistent effort needed to husband such insights. Goodman considers the influence of Neo-Platonic thought on Emerson and the differences between Emerson's essay "The Over-Soul" and his later essay "Experience," and writes in respect to the latter: "Despite the moments of vision, Emerson seems to be acknowledging, we mostly find ourselves lacking clarity and unity – fallen" (1997, 533). In his essays Emerson provides a range of viewpoints reflecting the focus of each essay, from those that emphasize a stronger idealism to those acknowledging the role of human limitation in a stronger way (particularly in his later thought), and the latter emphasis would move him closer to Gadamer's position.

tradition, whereas Emerson could be seen as working this out in terms of what I would see as a dynamic form of metaphysics, but both provide an account of reason that is more fluid and dynamic than that traditionally conceived of in ancient thought.[96] As such, without discounting that ancient thought and its strong emphasis on universality may be valuable in its own right in a contemporary context (despite Heidegger's and post-modern concerns with such universality), Gadamer and Emerson may provide valuable approaches of conceiving how experiences of universality may incorporate creative flux which may be relevant to present-day experiences of universality as a spiritual practice. This will be returned to in later chapters to bring this out in more detail.

Optimism and Creative Thought

For Emerson, like is known by like, and there is a certain sympathy between the knower and the object of knowledge and the outer world, so in order to experience, for example, the spiritual, one has to develop oneself to become similar to it through transforming oneself.[97] As Emerson explains in his chapter "Worship," "[t]hat only which we have within, can we see without. If we meet no gods, it is because we harbor none. If there is grandeur in you, you will find grandeur in porters and sweeps. He only is rightly immortal, to whom all things are immortal" (1983, 1070). For Emerson, when we change ourselves, our experience of the world changes. Greenham notes that "[p]erhaps the most important and foundational idea that Emerson would take from European Romanticism, and which allowed him to 'make' and 'animate' his own world, was their vision of that world as a creation of the individual self" (2012, x). For Emerson, humans are creators, but unfortunately the common state is generally one where we have forgotten

[96] It should be recalled from Chapter 3 that Gadamer develops experiences of universality in a way that he feels avoids Heidegger's critique of the metaphysics of presence. In this respect, if Emerson is following a similar approach to universality that avoids objective universals in favor of a more co-creative participatory approach that follows the same general pattern of how Gadamer engages tradition, Emerson too may avoid some of the concerns raised by Heidegger.

[97] Hadot writes that "Plotinus adopts the old saying, 'Like is known only by like'. This means […] that he believes we can seize the reality we wish to know only by becoming spiritually similar to it" (2004, 163). Here we find another commonality between Plotinus' and Emerson's thought.

our creative power. Crucial for Emerson is to mobilize our moral and creative forces and thought, which for him is a type of power that is experienced by connecting to a greater whole that streams through us and makes us creators instead of passively conforming with society or our own habitual tendencies. As Emerson writes in "Circles," thought is important:

> The things which are dear to men at this hour are so on account of the ideas which have emerged on their mental horizon, and which cause the present order of things as a tree bears its apples. A new degree of culture would instantly revolutionize the entire system of human pursuits. (1983, 407-408)

Change is led by the mind, as what we focus on or what is "dear to us" reflects itself in our lives, both individually and collectively.

Despite the optimism and idealism inherent in Emerson's thought, he is quite aware of the challenges of bringing out our ideals. As an illustration of this, let us consider a couple of passages from Emerson's 1844 essay "Experience," an essay composed after the death of his young son Waldo and seen as a turning point away from his idealism.[98] However, this assessment is questioned by some; for example, David Robinson describes this movement in Emerson's later works as "'less an acquiescence' before the limits of human power than a determined rethinking of how human possibilities can best be realized" (2008, 138). In this essay, Emerson writes: "I know that the world I converse with in the city and in the farms, is not the world I *think*. I observe that difference, and shall observe it. One day, I shall know the value and law of this discrepance" (1983, 491-492). However, this is followed later in the same essay by the following encouragement: "Never mind the ridicule, never mind the defeat: up again, old heart!—it seems to say,— there is victory yet for all justice; and the true romance which the world exists to realize, will be the transformation of genius into practical power" (1983, 492). The point for Emerson, even here in this later essay**,** is to carry on in the attempt to mobilize one's forces towards manifesting ideals. Even in the chapter "Fate" from *The Conduct of Life*, which considers limiting circumstances, he brings out the dynamic potential of thought and writes "Intellect annuls Fate. So far as a man thinks, he is free" (1983, 953). Furthermore, he notes that "[e]very solid in the universe is ready to become

[98] Stephen Whicher's *Freedom and Fate* (1953) is an influential work that maintains the position that Emerson's later thought was a transition away from his earlier idealism.

fluid on the approach of the mind, and the power to flux it is the measure of the mind" (1983, 964). Emerson's view, we need to empower our thinking, for when we truly think, great changes may occur, and we need to focus on this possibility. Creating a philosophy of possibility fosters possibility, while a philosophy of limitation fosters limitation. Seen from this perspective, Emerson's approach of looking past limitations towards possibilities takes on a very pragmatic aspect, allowing us not to 'buy into' individual or collective limiting perspectives under the guise of 'fixed aspects of reality'. Our assumptions can radically shift, as indicated when Emerson writes in the essay "Circles," "[b]eware when the great God lets loose a thinker on this planet. Then all things are at risk" (1983, 407). Emerson is very democratic in that everyone harbors this dynamic potential (although few use it) and in an ideal state of affairs, everyone would actualize this and create a more virtuous and creative world together.

Although Emerson is quite cognizant of limitations as seen in his considerations of fate and freedom, he works to provide approaches to help move past limitations to whatever extent possible, approaches that also seek to re-frame our limitations in terms of something positive and of possibility. In this respect, I would even suggest that Emerson's conception of fate could be seen in this light. For example, in "Fate" where he considers the struggle between fate and freedom, Emerson seems to provide a panacea for the pain of limiting conditions when he suggests that "[a] man must ride alternatively on the horses of his private and his public nature, as the equestrians in the circus throw themselves nimbly from horse to horse" (1983, 966). Furthermore, when someone is suffering, he is to "rally on his relation to the Universe, which his ruin benefits. Leaving the dæmon who suffers, he is to take sides with the Deity who secures universal benefit by his pain" (1983, 967). He later notes that "whatever lames or paralyses you, draws in with it the divinity, in some form, to repay," and makes the following suggestion: "Let us build altars to the Blessed Unity which holds nature and souls in perfect solution, and compels every atom to serve an universal end" (1983, 967). If we leave aside metaphysical considerations for the moment, I want to suggest that an aspect of Emerson's approach may consist in a practical method of reframing a negative situation into something positive that can be affirmed, or at the very least remove one's focus from. I would also argue in a similar vein when Emerson writes in his 1841 essay "Friendship" that "[i]t is foolish to be afraid of making our ties too spiritual, as if so we could lose

any genuine love. Whatever correction of our popular view we make from insight, nature will be sure to bear us out in, and though it seems to rob us of some joy, will repay us with greater" (1983, 353). I am suggesting that this may be seen as another example of how a loss is reframed as an optimistic hope and possibility, which may help 'reveal' and promote its experience. However, if we briefly consider the metaphysical implications of Emerson's position on fate and freedom, which Greenham describes as a "considered compatibilist position" (2015, 116), his position also points to the affirmation of limitation from a position of freedom, or to the unity of freedom with necessity. Robinson, citing Emerson's phrase from "Fate," "the inward eye opens to the Unity in things, to the omnipresence of law" (2008, 137; *W,* 6:23), goes on to explain how this "reconciles us to fate by showing it as freedom, something that, given enough knowledge, we would *choose*" (2008, 137). However, human possibility is a part of this law as man is a co-creator and Greenham explains that "Emerson's law is not God: it is a dynamic process that dissolves persons into its greater whole as it is itself generated from the free acts of those individual selves" (2015, 136-137). For Emerson, the intertwining of freedom and necessity seems to suggest both the need for obedience and harmony with the whole and fate and freedom both play a role here. This is done in such a way that it may promote contentment with and the affirmation of limitation when seen from more universal perspectives. However, this does not suggest indifference or paralysis of will and supports the impetus of human creativity. Robinson writes, "[i]f fate is the uncomprehended or unachieved, it is also the arena of the possible. Thus perceived, fate becomes freedom" (2008, 138). However, he goes on to note the challenge of achieving this: "The problem, of course, is to cultivate the state of mind capable of seeing limitation as a possibility, an achievement that required an enormously difficult discipline of the will" (2008, 138). In facing challenges, limitations and despair, Emerson seeks to reorient and invigorate us to the positive and possibility. He makes the point about the need to focus on the positive quite clearly in "Success," when he notes that "[t]he good mind chooses what is positive, what is advancing,—embraces the affirmative" (*CW7,* 156). He also explicitly warns against the negative:

> Don't be a cynic and disconsolate preacher. Don't bewail and bemoan. Omit the negative propositions. Nerve us with incessant affirmatives. Don't waste yourself in rejection, nor bark against the bad, but chant the beauty of the good. (*CW7*, 157)

Inner harmony is important for Emerson, and when one is in harmony with oneself and one expresses and acts from this perspective, others will respect this. Emerson wants us to find the strength of our vision and be steady in this. I am suggesting that for Emerson, focusing on positive possibility promotes looking past one's present circumstances towards other prospects, encouraging them to be realized. In "Fate," Emerson writes that "[t]he secret of the world is, the tie between person and event. Person makes event, and event person" (1983, 962). He conceives of a reciprocal relation between inner and outer and there is a sympathy between what we focus on and carry within us and the events we experience. Emerson emphasizes the causal nature of this, noting that "[a] man's fortunes are the fruit of his character. A man's friends are his magnetisms" (1983, 963). Elsewhere in his essay "Poetry and Imagination" he writes that "[a] man's action is only a picture-book of his creed. He does after what he believes. Your condition, your employment, is the fable of *you*" (*CW8*, 11-12). Emerson speaks to the dynamic potential of both our desire, aspiration and focus and potentiality for bringing better experiences forth and our own responsibility in this process, rather than, for example, blaming others, society or one's circumstances for one's limitations. For Emerson, what we focus on we create, so positive focus is essential. For example, Emerson makes the point that an aspect of self-reliance is that one shouldn't focus on one's regrets. Rather, one should be focusing on one's creative possibility, which is actually quite commonsensical as it encourages its realization and when we make the choice to focus on our ideals it will help us embody and experience them. Emerson elsewhere exhorts us to make sure our focus is high, advising in "Fate," "the high caution, that, since we are sure of having what we wish, we beware to ask only for high things" (1983, 966). Although there are strong tensions in Emerson's overall thought between the limitations of fate and freedom, the impetus of his idealism is to cultivate the power to break past habits and limitations wherever possible, with such freedom not consisting in the pursuit of personal whim but in becoming co-creators in harmony with the whole.

Heidegger's Conception of Concealing and Revealing

We will now turn to consider Emerson's viewpoint in relation to Heidegger's conception of truth being simultaneously concealed and revealed, a viewpoint which influenced and is important for the development of Gadamer's thought. I want to creatively draw upon Heidegger's conception, as it may help explain why a particular focus may help dynamically reveal certain possibilities. Heidegger's understanding of concealing and revealing is often used as a counterpoint to conceptions of truth as a progressive revealing of presence until a complete and absolute presence is achieved. Against such conceptions, Heidegger emphasizes that aspects of truth will always be concealed, thus maintaining the idea of a dynamic process of clearing and revealing. Given that any revealing is partial and in fact strongly influenced by the structure of our language and thought, it becomes quite important how we engage ourselves in the world. In this respect, following Heidegger's discussion of *Ge-stell*, a world en-framed within the conceptions of modern technology would tend to reveal nature as a "standing-reserve," something which is out there at the disposal of our will to serve our ends.[99] Within this "language world," things would tend to reveal themselves as objects to be manipulated, and, for example, aspects such as things having value in themselves and more poetic experiences such as our interconnection to nature may be concealed. Likewise, a more poetic language world may reveal more holistic aspects but conceal the technological manipulation that concerns Heidegger. Emerson suggests as much in "Poetry and Imagination":

> Events or things are only the fulfilment of the prediction of the faculties. Better men saw heavens and earths; saw noble instruments of noble souls. We see railroads, mills and banks, and we pity the poverty of these dreaming Buddhists. There was as much creative force then as now, but it made globes and astronomic heavens, instead of broadcloth and wine-glasses (*CW8*, 22)

[99] According to Heidegger, Western metaphysics with its forgetfulness of Being has led to technological mastery and control. See Heidegger's essay "The Question Concerning Technology," according to which technology inspires a mode of thought that encourages manipulation and control (Heidegger, 2008).

The nature of creative revealing is multi-faceted and dynamic and whether it reveals spiritual possibility or material production is a function of how we engage in the world.

Now, if we return to Emerson's approach to optimism from the perspective of concealing and revealing, we may see that far from being a type of naïve optimism, as some of his critics have contended,[100] I would maintain that there is actually a strong 'method' behind it. For Emerson, if we approach our day-to-day experiences with a sense of positivity and optimism and openness to the profound, then more positive, joyful, and meaningful outcomes may occur for us (that is, they may be "revealed"). Emerson explains in "Success" that "[t]he affirmative of affirmatives is love. As much love, so much perception. As caloric to matter, so is love to mind; so it enlarges, and so it empowers it. Good-will makes insight, as one finds his way to the sea by embarking on a river" (*CW7*, 157). For Emerson, love and interconnection open us to broader vistas of positive possibility and we should be careful not to cut ourselves off from sources of potential inspiration. For example, in his essay "Nominalist and Realist," Emerson points to how one must be careful with criticism:

> If you criticise a fine genius, the odds are that you are out of your reckoning, and, instead of the poet, are censuring your own caricature of him. […] For, rightly, every man is a channel through which heaven floweth, and, whilst I fancied I was criticizing him, I was censuring or rather terminating my own soul. (1983, 583-584)

That is, rather than criticizing others, we should be open to how they can inspire us. They are representative people who can reveal other possibilities that they have actualized and revealed, and we potentially have (that are currently concealed). In this vein, Emerson writes in 1841 his essay "Compensation": "If I feel overshadowed and outdone by great neighbours, I can yet love; I can still receive; and he that loveth maketh his own the grandeur he loves." Loving another rather than criticizing them opens us to a sympathetic relation to them, and Emerson continues by noting that "[t]hereby I make the discovery that my brother is my guardian, acting for me with the friendliest designs, and the estate I so admired and envied is my

[100] See Van Leer (1986) for a list of thinkers who questioned Emerson's optimism and seeming inability to see evil.

own" (1983, 301). A point to be taken from this is that when we have a positive sympathy with someone and their creations, this creates a sympathy with and encouragement for our own potentials, which helps them grow towards their actualization and the revealing of our own version of the attribute or experience desired. For Emerson, when we are criticizing someone we are actually attacking our own potentialities, leaving them "withering on the vine" so to speak, failing to actualize our own possibilities through lack of nourishment.

Emerson has concerns about an excessive focus on discursive thought, seeking higher intuition as his preferred experience. Cavell points out that "Emerson's image of clutching and Heidegger's of grasping emblematize their interpretation of Western conceptualizing as a kind of sublimized violence" (2003, 147). In this sense, conceptual judgment is a type of attack that en-frames reality rather than letting reality reveal itself more profoundly. However, I would suggest that even if we seek intuitive experience as with Emerson or meditative thinking as with Heidegger, we still have to deal with discursive thought, and given this, Emerson's approach helps us learn how to direct it and 'put it to good use,' so to speak. In this respect, if our judgments are really "attacking" reality, or put less violently, interacting with the world to reveal truth or experience (the romance with the world Emerson speaks of), based on this it may make sense to work on one's judgments and discursive thinking to help reveal the type of reality that is more positive, beneficial and profound. This doesn't mean that one doesn't pursue intuitive or meditative approaches as profound spontaneous experiences are primary for Emerson, but that the discursive theories and judgments that we carry are important to helping reveal certain experiences as opposed to others. Emerson remarks in his chapter "Worship," that "[t]he way to mend the bad world, is to create the right world" (1983, 1067) which I would take to mean that instead of fighting with the problems of one's life or of the greater world, we should focus on what we want and what is good and what we do well, because that focus tends to reveal and create itself in experience and in a sense cultivates an ongoing 'tradition' of positive possibility.

Thus, in a certain respect the focus on optimism and hope are important 'methods' of encouraging our potential that is currently concealed and dormant and spurring it towards realization. To speak figuratively, perhaps a given possibility can be seen as a seed, and optimism, hope, and positive thought can be seen as the water and nourishment to help that seed

dynamically grow into a plant or tree. As Henry David Thoreau remarks in his 1860 essay "The Succession of Forest Trees," "[t]hough I do not believe that a plant will spring up where no seed has been, I have great faith in a seed […]. Convince me that you have a seed there, and I am prepared to expect wonders" (1893, 248). For Emerson and Thoreau, we need a profound ideal or seed, something that is authentic to us and a vision to follow. At first, the seed may be completely concealed and its potential dormant, but with the correct husbandry it may reveal and grow into its potential, which according to Emerson for a human being consists in growing her dynamic potential through cultivating positive perspectives and receptivity to intuitive insight. In this process, positive representational thoughts may help 'prime' positive and profound experience but should be flexible enough to 'get out of the way' in order to be receptive to intuitive and spontaneous experience when they arise.

In this respect, although I have been focusing on optimism in relation to discursive thought, it should also be noted that for Emerson optimism is a general outlook which reflects the spiritual foundations of his perspective; that humans are good, that harmony, beauty, and something beneficent are stronger than the disharmony and whatever challenges we may face in life. As Urbas explains, "Emerson is optimistic *because reality itself is*, according to his metaphysical scheme—however quaint such a thesis is to us" and he notes that "[t]he useful, meliorative, progressive, beneficial tendency is built into life and reality" and this has "a metaphysical underpinning" (2016, 204). Urbas points to the possibility of Emerson's metaphysics encouraging intellectual mobility and maintains that "Emerson's 'affirmative philosophy' is not naïveté, nor is it a purely mental attitude; […] it is underwritten by the structure of the world, by the 'optimism of nature'" (2016, 206; *CW2*: 79). In Emerson's view, by being optimistic we tap into the flow of the metaphysical power, which is not an attempt at abstract metaphysics but rather points to the possibility of living a more dynamic and creative life.[101] Emerson remarks in the chapter "Considerations By the Way" in *The*

[101] Emerson's optimism is part of his overall conception of the power of the moral good running through reality. Emerson's understanding of evil is privative, meaning that evil is an absence of Good with no inherent reality in itself. This is a viewpoint that he inherits from Plotinus. See Van Cromphout for a description of Plotinus' doctrine and its influence on Emerson's position in respect to evil (1999, 36-39). Van Cromphout identifies Emerson as a "modern exponent of this originally Plotinian doctrine" (1999, 37)

Conduct of Life that "power dwells with cheerfulness; hope puts us in a working mood, whilst despair is no muse, and untunes the active powers," (1983, 1089) and an important aspect of this is coming in contact with ourselves and our own potential. In this respect, according to Emerson, when we tap into and follow our inner promptings, this leads us towards more joyful and fulfilling experience. Ideally, we would always be in contact with ourselves and creatively receive and develop our ideals and live a more blissful life. However, for Emerson heightened perspectives are usually experienced in glimpses, and the challenge is to maintain these insights through the trials of daily life, a task to which we will now turn to consider.

Practices

This chapter has explored a variety of Emerson's conceptions, including the difference between reason and understanding, the importance of receptivity to intuitive experience and the role of optimism and positive focus in his thought.

Given the importance of optimism for Emerson, I would suggest that a practice of learning to direct one's representational thoughts and focus could be derived to support optimistic thinking. This would involve being attentive to one's inner discourse and working to see things in a positive light. Thereby, one may learn to cultivate positive perspectives and re-frame negative points of view towards positive possibility. However, for Emerson optimism is more than just managing our thoughts, but rather is an overarching aspect of his thought and when one is being true to oneself, which is also being true to the whole, this is joyful. For example, in "Considerations by the Way," Emerson observes that "to make knowledge valuable, you must have the cheerfulness of wisdom. Whenever you are sincerely pleased, you are nourished. The joy of the spirit indicates its strength" (1983, 1089). In this respect, it could be said that happiness and joyfulness are a type of measure for Emerson as indicators that we are on the right path.

Although there is a tension in Emerson's thought between fate and freedom, there is a strong impetus towards self-reliance and positive possibility. Emerson writes in "Self-Reliance," an early work of his:

> There is a time in every man's education when he arrives at the conviction that envy is ignorance; that imitation is suicide, that he must take himself for better,

> for worse, as his portion; that though the wide universe is full of good, no kernel of nourishing corn can come to him but through his toil bestowed on that plot of ground that is given to him to till. The power that resides in him is new in nature, and none but he knows what that is which he can do, nor does he know until he has tried. (1983, 259)

This is a statement of responsibility for one's lot in life which seems designed to drive away reactive sentiments; that is, those sentiments which involve blaming outer circumstance and reinforcing limiting perspectives, and Emerson points to how one doesn't really know what one may accomplish until has made the effort to try. In the late work *The Conduct of Life*, Emerson reminds us of the need to take responsibility for our failures, so we can make corrective measures: "Whenever there is failure, there is some giddiness, some superstition about luck, some step omitted, which Nature never pardons" (1983, 1095). He then goes on to point to the need for consistency to one's vision: "There must be fidelity, and there must be adherence. How respectable the life that clings to its objects! Youthful aspirations are fine things, your theories and plans of life are fair and commendable:—but will you stick?" (1983, 1096). Emerson also notes that "[t]he hero is he who is immovably centred" (1983, 1096). These viewpoints do not indicate that Emerson is unaware of limitations but rather reflects his view that one needs to be open to possibility and be unswerving in following ideals to work towards overcoming one's limits. This supports the contention made earlier that the transition in Emerson's later work towards persistence and focus rather than intuitive insight is not necessarily a backing away from his earlier idealism, but a greater recognition of the need for consistently working to bring about change in daily life. In this respect, he seems to follow a similar trajectory in Hadot's own thought; when he was younger Hadot was greatly inspired by the mystical experiences of Plotinus, but as he grew older Plotinus was less compelling to him. He notes that from the 1970 onwards, he had the strong conviction that it was the Stoics and Epicureans that could "nourish the spiritual life of men and women of our times, as well as my own" (Hadot 1995, 280). Both Hadot and Emerson seemed increasingly to turn to an emphasis on steady and focused effort of tangible and practical self-transformation, where experiences of holism are grounded in everyday life, which has important implications for the form that

philosophy as a way of life may take in a contemporary context.[102] For Emerson, in the face of limiting circumstances in life, optimism and openness to new possibilities are perspectives that need to be consistently worked at and cultivated, 're-framing' failure and limitation into possibility. This points to mobilizing our creative potential and herein lies a continuity between Emerson's earlier and later thought.

In Emerson's view, by criticizing others, this cuts us off from our own potential and in the chapter "Wealth" from *The Conduct of Life*, he points to the value of seeing the best in others: "We say, that every man is entitled to be valued by his best moment. We measure our friends so. We know, they have intervals of folly, whereof we take no heed, but wait for the reappearings of genius, which are sure and beautiful" (1983, 1102). I would suggest that learning to seeing the best in others and in ourselves and limiting criticism is a potential practice that may be gathered from Emerson's thought. In this respect, it should be recalled that in Chapter 2 that Gadamer draws connections between being a friend with others and being a friend to oneself, which again points to the reciprocal nature of this endeavor.

In order to mobilize Emerson's perspectives further, it may be helpful to seek inspiration from Stoic viewpoints to help inspire a practice to become more aware one's judgments and inner dialogue. Hadot explains:

> Real logic is not a pure theory of logic, but lived logic, the act of thinking in a correct way, or exercising one's thinking in a correct way in everyday life. There is thus a lived logic, which the Stoics would say consist in criticizing representations, that is, the images that come from the outside world—to avoid rushing to say that a given thing that happens is evil or good, but to reflect, to criticize the representation. (2011, 94)

[102] Hadot explains in an interview: "To sum up my inner evolution, I would say the following: in 1946, I naively believed that I, too, could relive the Plotinian mystical experience. But I later realized that this was an illusion. The conclusion of my book *Plotinus* already hinted that the idea of the 'purely spiritual' is untenable. It is true that there is something ineffable in human existence, but this ineffable is *within* our very perception of the world, in the mystery of our existence and that of the cosmos. Still, it can lead to an experience which could be qualified as mystical" (1995, 281). Put this way, this sounds quite close to Emerson's Transcendentalism with its emphasis on "the miraculous is in the common" (1983, 47).

A lived logic involves cultivating a greater awareness of our representations to help us cultivate a freedom to not unthinkingly take them on. For the Stoics, an important aspect of maintaining peace of mind was the distinction between what depends on us and what doesn't, a viewpoint supported by their understanding of universal reason and predestination.[103] In the spirit of Hadot's suggestion of divorcing practices from their outmoded metaphysical discourses, I would like to draw on a Stoic practice of attentiveness but cut away from it the concern of what depends on one or not and strong conceptions of predestination. Here I want to follow up on Emerson's point that we are creators, with the impetus to mobilize our thought to encourage ideals in spite of outer circumstances that may stand in the way, while also considering the importance of his view of learning to be content with what we have and the limitations we may be experiencing. It would seem to me that a kind of balance and practical wisdom is needed here to distinguish what may be possible and what may not be, while still being open to Emerson's general emphasis on possibility.[104]

Hadot explains in respect to the Stoics that logic was not limited solely to abstract theory but "rather, there was a daily practice of logic applied to the problems of everyday life. Logic was thus the mastery of inner discourse" (2004, 135). Thus, "we must […] monitor our inner discourse to see whether erroneous value judgments have crept into it, for this would add something foreign to the comprehensive representation" (2004, 135). Hadot explains that this involves looking at how objects are rather than adding our own prejudices to them (2004, 136). For Emerson, the goal is not only to follow universal reason as an acquiescence to reality, or even to follow some kind of universal will as something completely determined (although both of these will certainly play a part), but rather to dynamically manifest ideals, which, as we have seen in respect to the intellect constructive adds a creative

[103] James Woelfel notes that the Stoics held that humans had "very limited power to change events" which is their doctrine of "*world-acceptance* or *resignation*" (2011, 126), but maintained that humans had the freedom to amend their attitude towards occurrences in the world.

[104] See Chapter 5, where it is suggested that Gadamer's emphasis on finitude and Emerson's on infinitude may be important counterbalances for the potential excesses of each position.

element to this process. This would be an individual expression that is in harmony with the whole.[105]

Reason for Emerson is something that we can tap into and creatively extend, so we actually are co-creating to improving the world and making it more reasonable if one wanted to put it that way. In Emerson's account, intuitive experience and virtue unleash practical power to bring about change in the present. The goal is not acquiescence to a given state of affairs to promote serenity, but rather to manifest the moral and ideal to promote a more joyful and fulfilling state of affairs. Emerson writes in the early essay "Heroism" (1841) that "[w]hen the Spirit is not master of the world, then it is the dupe" (1983, 375), and in the chapter "Power" from the *The Conduct of Life* he writes: "A feeble man can see the farms that are fenced and tilled, the houses that are built. The strong man sees the possible houses and farms. His eye makes estates, as fast as the sun breeds clouds" (1983, 974). In this respect, we should not only consider what is but what may be. On the one hand in "Fate," Emerson affirms what is ("[l]et us build altars to the Beautiful Necessity" (1983, 967), which emphasizes saying 'yes' to existence),[106] while on the other hand also promotes looking past what currently is towards what may be. There is certainly tension in Emerson's account, but it may be seen as an attempt that draws upon modern conceptions of freedom and ancient philosophical conceptions of moral order and destiny.

In this respect, a possible Emersonian practice that I am pointing to (inspired by Stoic attentiveness and divorced from Stoic metaphysical presuppositions), could consist in focusing on perspectives that encourage positivity, optimism, possibility, focusing on ideals, etc., and discouraging focus on things such as negativity and values that do not reflect our ideals (e.g. conformity, past habit, negative thoughts, etc.). An important part of this would be to also positively affirm our limitations (e.g. be grateful and happy with what we have). This would be a practice to encourage becoming

[105] There is a great deal of tension in Emerson's account as to how much individual creative impetus one may actually have in the act of expression given his emphasis on universality. However, the point I want to make here is that there is a role for individual expression and co-creation in Emerson's thought in terms of bringing about a different and improved state of affairs.

[106] Hadot points to the importance of affirming of what is in the present moment (see 1995, 235).

aware of one's representations and choosing whether to accept them or not based on whether they practically serve us, both in respect to positively affirming our ideals to help encourage a better future state of affairs and concurrently affirming a current state of affairs. Although a strain may be seen between these two positions, it is possible that the very act of affirming and being grateful for a current state of affairs may help remove negative focus and narratives, freeing up focus for more ideal creations. This could be taken with a sense of play as a creative way of becoming more aware of one's assumptions and utilizing one's outlook to more effectively create the life that one wants, which for Emerson is a joyful life.[107] A very simple example of shifting to the positive can be seen in his 1841 essay "Spiritual Laws," where Emerson points out that when we lack confidence in our abilities in comparison to others, "[t]his overestimate of the possibilities of Paul and Pericles, this under-estimate of our own, comes from a neglect of the fact of an identical merit" (1983, 322). That is, acknowledging our commonality with others is used to reframe a situation formerly seen as negative and limiting by pointing to our own potential. Although Emerson considers both freedom and fate, Greenham maintains "[i]t is always the intention that power will triumph" (2015, 134). I agree with this assessment, and the impetus provided by Emerson entails a mobilizing of one's power to overcome limitations, or at the very least, to act productively and appropriately within the scope of one's limitations and creatively find possibilities within the realistic opportunities they offer.

Cavell's linguistic interpretation of Emerson provides an interesting way to consider the relation between freedom and fate in Emerson's thought. Considering Emerson's notion of Fate, Cavell writes:

> Now it says openly that language is our fate. It means, hence, that not exactly prediction, but diction, is what puts us in bonds, that with each word we utter we emit stipulations, agreements we do not know and do not want to know we have entered, agreements we were always in, that were in effect before our participation in them. (2003, 72)

[107] This process may be seen as having affinities with the self-reflective component of Gadamer's approach of bringing our prejudices into play discussed in Chapter 3. We should also keep in mind that for Emerson our ideals relate to universal experience, so creating a life that we want should be seen in the context of co-creating in harmony with a greater whole which for Emerson is joyful.

Here Cavell has taken a conception of fate which is normally associated with metaphysical features and now 'translated' this into our lived experience of language. An important benefit of this is that conceptions of language provide a viewpoint that may help avoid some of the metaphysical quandaries about fate and destiny. Through focusing on how we use ordinary language we may work towards extricating ourselves from our everyday limitations and potentially more freedom may be gained. Cavell cites Emerson's words, "Intellect annuls Fate. So far as a man thinks, he is free," and goes on to explain that "[t]his apparently genteel thought now turns out to mean that we have a say in what we mean, that our antagonism to fate, to which we are fated, and in which our freedom resides, is a struggle with the language we emit, of our character with itself" (2003, 72). Conceiving this linguistically may be a helpful way of focusing on our power to change. Cavell explains that "his [Emerson's] writing is meant to enact its subject, that it is a struggle against itself, hence of language with itself, for its freedom. Thus is writing thinking, or abandonment" (2003, 73). In this respect, if much of our fate is being entangled in language worlds and mutual agreements therein, it may be helpful to be very attentive to our use of language in thought, conversation and written expression. In this respect, optimism, seen linguistically, could be considered as cultivating, for example, a preference for positive adjectives or descriptors that may support possibility rather than limitation and encourage the actualization of ideals.

The way we use language also has strong affinities with our thoughts and experience of the outer world. Cavell's writes: "The vision of *every word* in our—in human—language as requiring attention, as though language as such has fallen from or may aspire to a higher state, a state, say, in which the world is more perfectly expressed" (2003, 114). Later he remarks that "Emerson will say, or show, that words demand conversion or transfiguration or reattachment, where Wittgenstein will say they are to be led home, as from exile" (2003, 114). There is a need to use language differently to better reflect the aspirations for this higher state and to be led home. Heightened and participatory experience may be in conflict with the rigidifying linguistic structures of the world we find ourselves in, and the impetus of Emerson's thought is to mobilize our power to work against this, and this may be envisaged via poetic language. Here may note a potential strong proximity to Gadamer's thought; for example, Gadamer writes that "[i]n words we are at home. In words there is a kind of guarantee for what

they say. These things are especially clear in the poetic use of language (2007, 107). When we use poetic language, we are led back to a more authentic experience of ourselves, a homecoming if you will. However, this approach to change through observing our discourse need not be conceived in terms of language; our previous discussion has centered on thought and I think both language and thought are helpful ways of conceiving this. In this respect, we could say that our collective fate, limitations, and freedom relate to the way we think, which is supported by Emerson's contentions that new ways of thinking lead to new forms of culture and of course new forms of language would lead to this as well.

Greenham explores the importance of writing for Emerson and how it is received from beyond our conscious will, and notes that "[i]ndeed writing comes 'by the grace of God'. This, though, should be taken in the context of what Emerson thinks God is—namely that which works through and as man as creativity" (2012, 166-167). In this respect, it should be recalled that although will and attunement are important, spontaneous experience is primary for Emerson. Within a linguistic reading of Emerson, through our linguistic expression we may measure our own departure from our own potential. Writing is an expressive act that may both be seen as an attempt to both be true to an initial receptive experience and creatively evolve it in our expression, a process that may leave behind or evolve our former ways of using language. Attending to oneself and expressing of oneself through writing, artistic production, or even working at changing simple habits may allow us to 're-write' our habitual tendencies and language worlds, and this may be seen as an important practice. However, it should be noted that unlike Gadamer, for Emerson language is not a "universal medium" (meaning that it is ubiquitous and fundamental to human understanding); as he writes in *Nature*: "The central Unity is still more conspicuous in actions. Words are finite organs of the infinite mind. They cannot cover the dimensions of what is in truth. They break, chop and impoverish it. An action is the perfection and publication of thought" (1983, 30).[108] In this respect, there is a stronger emphasis in Emerson's thought on Mind rather than language and there is a tension because of this with linguistically

[108] In places, he also envisages a more expansive role for language. For example, in "The Poet" he writes: "Words and deeds are quite indifferent modes of the divine energy. Words are also actions, and actions are a kind of words" (1983, 450).

oriented readings of Emerson. However, in my view, whether we conceive of the process of becoming more fluid and relational in terms of thought or language, both are helpful approaches. And, as the above quote attests, for Emerson action is of primary importance, so self-transformation is crucial however we may conceive the theory behind this.

Of course, given Gadamer's emphasis on language a linguistic reading of Emerson fosters a stronger commonality between Gadamer and Emerson and many of the conceptions being discussed in respect to being more attendant to language or thought could be transferred over to Gadamer's hermeneutic viewpoint. For example, attending to our habitual judgments and thought and how we use language could be used to help bring us into more awareness of our prejudices and so change them. Furthermore, a crucial perspective of Gadamer's is encouraging the use of language in more metaphorical and poetic directions and cultivating an awareness of the possibility of using language in different ways could support this. The use of poetic language will be explored in relation to both Gadamer and Emerson in Chapter 5.

According to Hadot, an important aspect of the Stoic attempt to master inner discourse was bringing to mind the dogmas or rules of life (precepts) of the school, a process which can be furthered by writing them down. He explains that the repetitions one can find in Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations* were an effort to live and apply such formulations more fully to his daily life. Hadot explains that "[d]ogmas are not mathematical rules, learned once and for all and then mechanically applied. Rather, they must somehow become achievements of awareness, intuitions, emotions, and moral experiences which have the intensity of a mystical experience or a vision. This spiritual and affective spirituality is, however, quick to dissipate" (2001, 51). This tendency to lose contact with such insight is something that Emerson was very well aware of, given that his accounts often point to their fleeting nature. In this respect, an important purpose of Emerson's journal was to ground his insight into a tangible form for future use.[109] Richardson writes:

> Emerson's non-Calvinist, Rousseau-like belief that we are born not just good, but open—to the world and to others—led him to prize first thoughts, hints, glimmers, premonitions, first-formings, harbringers, and he took extraordinary

[109] Hadot (2001) discusses the importance of dogmas for the Stoics schools. In this respect, Emerson´s writing is highly amenable to aphoristic use.

> care all his life to capture in writing his first impressions. He told Elizabeth Peabody to write down her thoughts *as they came to her*, and in the imagery *in which they first appeared*. He did this himself, and he was even careful to write down what he could remember of his dreams when he awoke. (2009, 37)

This attentiveness to insight and the accompanying emphasis on recording it via a journal or otherwise can be seen as an important Emersonian practice. Here we can also see an attempt at receptivity and keeping to the purity of the original experience. However, as we have also seen above in respect to the intellect constructive, there is also a creative aspect of bringing insight into expression through language. This points to the value of both reading and writing as spiritual practices, and Hadot explains that with repetition and writing, "[t]he goal is to reactualize, rekindle, and ceaselessly reawaken an inner state which is in constant danger of being numbed or extinguished. The task—ever-renewed—is to bring back to order an inner discourse which becomes dispersed and diluted in the futility of routine" (2001, 51). Through the act of recording insights and being able to bring them back to mind at times during the course of the day could be a valuable practice. Likewise, if we return to the importance of possibility and optimism for Emerson, a possible practice is to bring these viewpoints to mind or writing them down to help instil the habits of optimistic thought. More generally, the act of interpretation or writing about a text (e.g. writing thoughtful philosophy or literary criticism) may also a valuable practice akin to bringing philosophical viewpoints to mind, as, even if one is not consciously working with different dogmas or sayings, by opening oneself to considering the subject matter of a text and thoughtful expressing one's understanding through writing may foster self-transformation. In this respect, short quotes or ideas from Emerson's or Gadamer's writings or otherwise could be used to inspire. Learning the dogmas of a philosophical school was an important practice in ancient philosophy and was part of what Hadot explains as the existential choice of life which each school offered. Given that Hadot points to how different schools of ancient thought may be seen as an experimental laboratory for modern purposes, when pursued with a sense a freedom (e.g. a more eclectic approach, not necessarily limited to a particular thinker), this would seem to be a quite easy practice to transfer to a contemporary context. That is, different sayings or viewpoints from different modern and ancient thinkers could be drawn upon to help inspire self-transformation. This can be seen as a practice of lived logic, where sayings are drawn upon to effect practical change in one's life.

Chapter 5 – Gadamer's Aesthetics and Emerson's Aesthetic and Spiritual Viewpoints

In previous chapters, we have pointed to how Hadot emphasizes the importance of experiences of transcendence and interconnection to a greater whole. In this chapter, we will turn to Gadamer's aesthetics and Emerson's aesthetic and spiritual perspectives for practices that may encourage experiences of transcendence and insight.

Something that stands out in Gadamer's and Emerson's thought is their mutual commitment towards encouraging experiences of holism. Gadamer develops an array of conceptions such as his understanding of the symbol, the beautiful, festival, play and poetic language to encourage more relational viewpoints. For Gadamer, these aesthetic conceptions may be seen as intensifications of the movement beyond one's prejudices towards broader perspectives such as those depicted in Chapter 2 and 3. Experiences of interconnection and intensified experience are also a crucial aspect of Emerson's thought and his use of symbol, metaphor, analogy as well as his emphasis on experiences of holism more generally reflect this. For Gadamer, aesthetics seems to take on the traditional role played by metaphysics in Western thought. Given the strong emphasis Hadot places on transcendence, aesthetic viewpoints may be an important contemporary placeholder for spiritual practices.

Gadamer's Aesthetics

As we have seen, hermeneutic theory is not something just to be thought about, but rather relates the process of self-understanding. Gadamer explains that "[o]ur experience of the aesthetic too is a mode of self-understanding. Self-understanding always occurs through understanding something other than the self and includes the unity and integrity of the other" (2004, 83). Although Gadamer's aesthetics is subsumed within his hermeneutics, it is an exemplary way to experience truth. Language is central to Gadamer's hermeneutics and is the universal medium through which all our understanding is mediated and he holds the view that language is speculative,

meaning that it promotes the experience of a greater whole. Gadamer explains, by giving the example of a statement such as might be given in an interrogation that goes on record that "meaning thus reduced to what is stated is always distorted meaning" (2004, 465). In contrast:

> To say what one means, on the other hand—to make oneself understood—means to hold what is said together with an infinity of what is not said in one unified meaning and to ensure that it is understood in this way. Someone who speaks in this way may well use only the most ordinary and common words and still is able to express what is unsaid and is to be said. Someone who speaks is behaving speculatively when his words do not reflect beings, but express a relation to the whole of being. (2004, 464-65)

Whatever is said points to the unsaid and Gadamer's speculative conception of language encourages the experience of a greater whole. For Gadamer poetic language is language at its most speculative, an intensification of everyday speech (2004, 466). Put another way, the experience of relational viewpoints through the experience of poetic language helps break past some of the limitations of representational and conceptual thought. Or, viewed from yet another vantage point, we could say that our ordinary habits of thoughts and prejudices rely on certain pre-established lines of thought and usages of language and the experience of a greater whole may help bring such prejudices into question. Seen in this light, we could say that aesthetic experiences are a heightening of the attempt to cultivate an openness to more universal viewpoints through the experience of dialogue and tradition as we considered in Chapter 2 and 3. Poetry, like the experience of art more generally can found its own creative truth and transform us. Intensified experiences of relationality are crucial to Gadamer's aesthetics and this is reflected in Gadamer's conception of the symbol, to which we will now turn.

Symbol

Gadamer explains that the symbol for the Greeks was a "token of remembrance" (1986b, 31), a *tessera hospitalis* entailing that a host would break some object in two, keeping one half for himself and giving the other half to the guest. At a future time, a descendant of the guest could visit the host's house and the two pieces could be fitted together "to form a whole in an act of recognition". Gadamer adds: "In its original technical sense, the

symbol represented something like a sort of pass used in the ancient world: something in and through which we recognize something already known to us" (1986b, 31). Gadamer also draws on Aristophanes' story from Plato's *Symposium* related to the nature of love, which recounts that originally human beings were spherical creatures but on account of their misbehavior they were split in two by the Gods. Because of this they are seeking to be made whole again through love. Gadamer is seeking to apply this perspective of recognition to art and the notion of reconciling broken tokens in relation to the symbol suggests the possibility for more holistic experience beyond fragmented perspectives. This holism is something that we may not initially or normally be aware of but may be cultivated through aesthetic attentiveness.

An important aspect of Gadamer's aesthetics is that there cannot be a complete capturing of meaning conceptually (1986b, 37). In Gadamer's view, there are other modes of truth beyond the conceptual which aesthetic experience can capture and thus he maintains that "we typically encounter art as a unique manifestation of truth whose particularity cannot be surpassed" (1986b, 37). He points towards symbolic meaning that resists complete conceptualization and goes on to conclude that "all art of whatever kind […] always demands constructive activity on our part" (1986b, 37). We must work to understand art and approach it as something that may change our self-understanding, a process that involves both rational and more poetic and intuitive experience.

Gadamer's account of the symbolic is presentational, which means that whatever reveals itself through the symbol does not point to something outside of it but is revealed within the symbol (see Gadamer, 2004). He also draws upon Heidegger's conception of concealing and revealing, which entails that there never will be a complete revealing of meaning in full transparency, and the relative obscurity of the symbol may be contrasted with the clarity of Hegel's Idea in this respect.[110] Gadamer writes "in the last analysis, Goethe's statement 'Everything is a symbol' is the most comprehensive formulation of the hermeneutical idea. It means that everything points to another thing. This 'everything' is not an assertion about

[110] Whereas Hegel points to the possibility of a complete transparency in the Idea, for Gadamer there always be some obscurity in respect to his conception of the symbol and within his thought more generally.

each being, indicating what it is, but an assertion as to how it encounters man's understanding" (2008, 103). Just as we saw above with respect to Gadamer's speculative conception of language, the symbol seems to serve a similar role of encouraging intensified experiences of relationality. Gadamer also draws from Goethe's account of the symbol that symbolic experience is obscure and can never be fully understood. For Gadamer, the experience of work of art and symbolic experience encourages a sense of greater interconnection and promotes change: "It is not only the 'This art thou!' disclosed in a joyous and frightening shock; it also says to us; 'Thou must alter thy life!'" (2008, 104). This points to the potential for self-transformation, whereby we reorient ourselves away from our own particular, limited and egotistic viewpoints towards more relational perspectives. This sense of interconnection is often hidden in ordinary experience but can rise forth through profound aesthetic experience. This is not just a momentary experience that is forgotten, but rather is something that may change one's life. In this respect, Gadamer criticizes aesthetic conceptions that sever art from everyday reality. Art is not a separate realm to which we might escape from the everyday, but rather opens us towards more true and intensified experiences. These experiences are not only subjective; the experience of a work of art is one of truth and such experience can overwhelm us and address us strongly enough to provoke self-transformation. I would suggest that Gadamer's approach to the symbol may be seen as a type of practice aimed at cultivating more relational perspectives than we may normally experience, helping us move beyond dogmatic and limiting points of view.

In Gadamer's presentational account of aesthetic experience, he points to the productive value of a picture versus it being a mere copy of an original (Gadamer, 2004). Whereas a copy is self-effacing and points back to an original, a picture is rather an experience of truth in its presentation and is an "*increase of being*" (2004, 135). Here Gadamer draws upon the Neo-Platonic conception of emanation, which, according to him gets beyond Greek substance ontology and is the basis for "the positive ontological status of the picture" (2004, 135). For Gadamer, what is pictured is ontologically connected with and in communion with the original and is an opportunity for the presentation of what is and an increase of and event of being. This presentational account of experience runs through his account of a symbol and his hermeneutics more generally and is reflected, for example, in his

understanding of interpretation as a productive event. Put more simply, whether we are considering interpretation or aesthetic experience, both are experiences of productive emergence from which something new occurs beyond what already was, an increase of being.

The Beautiful

Now that we have seen the importance of presentation in Gadamer's thought, we will turn to briefly consider Gadamer's understanding of the beautiful. Gadamer points to the role of the beautiful to close the separation between appearance and idea in Plato's thought (Gadamer, 2004), and he considers the beautiful in relation to his own aesthetics and conception of the symbol (Gadamer, 1986b). For Gadamer, an experience of truth through the experience of a work of art does not point beyond the work, nor is it a general experience of a universal law. He writes: "[Within] the apparent particularity of sensuous experience, which we always attempt to relate to the universal, there is something in our experience of the beautiful that arrests us and compels us to dwell upon the individual fact itself" (1986b, 16). This finds parallels with Gadamer's presentational account of the symbol with its emphasis on meaning residing within the symbol itself. The beautiful does not point beyond itself but rather is an appearance of the ideal. Gadamer also draws upon Plato's *Phaedrus* and explains that "Plato describes the beautiful as that which shines forth most clearly and draws us to itself, as the very visibility of the ideal" (1986b, 15). In Gadamer's view, the beautiful does not point beyond itself to the ideal, but rather the ideal appears within the visible through the beautiful. According to Gadamer, there is truth within the experience of the beautiful in nature and art (1986b, 15). Here we see an example of the importance of classical conceptions of beauty, order, and harmony for Gadamer. For Gadamer, such truth is not in another realm divorced from reality, but rather harmony and truth can be found amidst the disorder of ordinary reality. This points towards the possibility for aesthetic experiences of greater harmony and holism in the here and now. Here we can see how Gadamer makes a transfer from the type of truth found in metaphysics (for example in a second world of Platonic Forms) now to be considered via his aesthetics as an ontological and linguistic experience. This transition will be considered further in Chapter 6.

The Festival

Gadamer's conception of the festival is another variant of the theme of interconnection and community, one that may encourage moving past egotism and societal separations towards freer and more profound states. Gadamer explains that "[i]f there is one thing that pertains to all festive experiences, then it is surely the fact that they allow no separation between one person and another. A festival is an experience of community and represents community in its most perfect form. A festival is meant for everyone" (1986b, 39). For Gadamer, in a festival judgments, separations and hierarchies between individuals are set aside in favor of a common respect and openness to all, where instead of falling into individual conversations and activities a sense of unity prevails. This points towards communal experiences which may lead to a greater sense of unity than may normally be experienced. We have no doubt all experienced aspects of this during the yearly celebration of a nation's founding, Christmas, or other festive occasions. This encouragement to become open to a greater sense of community than we are normally aware of is a common theme in Gadamer's thought more generally. According to Gadamer, festivals are of a cyclical and recurring nature and this is something that occurs in its own time and is "not subject to the abstract calculation of temporal duration" (1986b, 41). He also explains that there is an art to celebration and well as a sense of community that is hard to define and has no completely defined purpose; when "enacting" a festival, the aim is not to arrive somewhere and there is no final purpose. Gadamer explores how a normal sense of time can lead to either emptiness and boredom or frantic bustling, explaining that "we never have time for anything and yet constantly have things to do" (1986b, 42). In contrast to empty time that has to be occupied is what Gadamer calls "'fulfilled' or autonomous time" (1986b, 42), which in a sense stops the normal course of time and instead allows it to tarry. Instead of falling into boredom or scurrying around with our own private agendas, a more festive approach moves toward an aesthetic tarrying, being in the moment and reaching towards deeper levels of experience.

In this respect, it may be fruitful to briefly look back on our consideration of the "I/Thou" relation in Chapter 2 in order to consider the role of Gadamer's aesthetics in relation to his hermeneutic project more generally. We may recall how Gadamer explained the experience of a type 1

form of relating to a Thou which I have termed "manipulative" that relates to the other in terms of predicting. More broadly considered, such a predictive approach is one that operates through the lens of control; that is, it is the attempt to frame reality into our own preconceptions and habitual modes of thought.[111] Gadamer's considerations of type 2 and 3 approaches to a Thou that work towards truly respecting the Thou and following the subject matter may be seen as approaches to help counter this tendency and encourage refining and even perhaps shattering prejudices when they come across more universal experiences of truth. If we were to speak figuratively, we could say that our edifices of thought are like castles in the sand, and that for Gadamer, when we learn to treat the other as a Thou, this in certain ways undermines the rigidity and structural support of our castle(s), loosening our habitual modes of discursive thought that project certain relations rather than submitting to the truth of the subject matter. Seen in this light, the hermeneutic practice of openness works from the inside out to loosen the bonds of our attachments to undermine the stability or foundations of this/these castle(s).

Gadamer's aesthetics in a certain sense can be seen as working from the outside in, from the vantage point of a greater whole. A festival is something that potentially radically undermines our habitual separations and projections; gone are our ordinary senses of efficiency and purpose and time; gone are our habitual roles; instead, we have a sense of community and oneness, an experience of just being, and being together just being. When we consider this in relation to ordinary edifices of thought, figuratively it is like the proverbial tide that comes in and washes away our castle(s) in the sand. It could be said that the powerful experience of a greater whole overwhelms our futile attempts at mastery and control, taking us up in an experience of truth, more specifically that we are part of a greater community and whole of which we are only a part. Viewed cyclically, we could see a series of tides

[111] This isn't just a matter of individuals undertaking such a mode of thought, but more broadly considered in relation to our brief discussion on Heidegger's thought in Chapter 4, the tendency towards mastery and control is an edifice of Western thought (and metaphysics according to Heidegger). Seen in this light, Gadamer's (and Heidegger's) thought is geared to help break out of this collective form of en-framing reality that they relate to the excessive emphasis on scientific objectivity and technological mastery. Thus, Gadamer's thought can be seen as a radical attempt to undermine possible distortions in contemporary thought.

taking out successive edifices of thought, each creative destruction opening the way to a revealing of a new experience of being. Given Gadamer's commitment to finitude, such transitions will never be final or complete but rather partial revisions and an ongoing experience of self-transformation.

Traditionally, in Western thought such experiences of a greater whole have been couched within the language of metaphysics. In this respect, it is instructive to compare how Gadamer, as considered at the start of this chapter, relates the unsaid to the linguistic experience of a greater whole, and, for example, how Emerson writes in "The Over-Soul" that "[t]he action of the soul is oftener in that which is felt and left unsaid, than in that which is said in any conversation" (1983, 390-91). Here we behold an example of how Gadamer's use of language parallels Emerson's usage of more traditional metaphysical terminology such as soul to consider experiences of self-transcendence.[112] Likewise, let us consider how Gadamer, when he considers his conception of tarrying over a work of art, relates this to the experience of the eternal (a traditional metaphysical conception):

> When we dwell upon the work, there is no tedium involved, for the longer we allow ourselves, the more it displays its manifold riches to us. The essence of our temporal experience of art is in learning how to tarry in this way. And perhaps it is the only way that is granted to us finite beings to relate to what we call eternity. (1986b, 45)

This conception of tarrying points towards approaching art and daily life with an enhanced sense of presence and interconnection and provides a temporal account of what traditionally has been associated with the eternal in philosophical thought. My point here is a simple one; there is a connection between metaphysics and aesthetics and this connection is relevant to our considerations of experience of transcendence and how this may be developed for present-day application. This will be considered further later in this chapter as well as in subsequent chapters. We will now turn to explore Gadamer´s account of the process of aesthetic self-transformation.

[112] As we saw in Chapter 4, Emerson uses a variety of other terms such as soul, the One, Intellect, etc.

Play and Transformation into Structure

In Gadamer account of play it is an experience which has no purpose but the play itself: "Play fulfills its purpose only if the player loses himself in play" (2004, 103). In Gadamer's view, a person's experience of a work of art it is not that of an isolated subject standing against a separate object but rather is a medial and participatory experience. Here we see another example in Gadamer's thought of stepping out of our ordinary experience of ourselves as a separate subject. There is a to and fro movement of play between the player as the person who experiences the work of art and the artwork itself and play is not related to any goal (2004, 104). Although the players take part in this movement, they are taken up in something that is largely beyond their control, as "all playing is a being-played" (2004, 106), and Gadamer notes that "the real subject of the game […] is not the player but instead the game itself" (2004, 106). Here we see the recurrent theme of a part being taken up in a greater whole. In respect his conception of the game, Gadamer explains that there is a spirit to each game which has its own rules, and this conception of a game is one that is seemingly contingent and founds its own truth within itself.[113] The experience of play and art takes us out of ourselves and we return to ourselves, but our selves are changed through this process, so we are different returning than when we left. This is an ongoing process in the to and from movement of play, where players are taken out of themselves by engaging in a game and undergo a transformation in this process.

Gadamer explains that he calls "the change when human play comes to its true consummation in being art, *transformation into structure*" (2004, 110). Transformation into structure is an experience of radical transformation and someone undergoing this "become[s] another person, as it were" (2004,

[113] It may be instructive to turn back to a further consideration of metaphysics and art. For example, as per Platonic metaphysics as traditionally considered, the experience a second truer world of Being is true and an experience of the Real. If we wanted to consider this in respect to Gadamer's trope of the game, the Forms and the Good are a Game, a true Game in contrast to our habitual 'games' within the shadow world of our cave of illusions and becoming (see Chapter 6 for a consideration of Plato's analogy of the Cave). For Gadamer, truth does not lie in a second world of Forms, but rather now is locus lies within the artwork, game or other contingent manifestation such as a festival as they partake in the ongoing emergence of becoming.

110).[114] Gadamer (2004) explains that a superior truth speaks through this structure and it is a truth that stands in itself. As we have seen, this is a common theme in Gadamer's account of aesthetic truth; that is, the artwork stands within itself as its own measure. Gadamer gives an example that what is presented in a drama is like a religious act and a "superior truth speaks from it" (2004, 112). Here we see an example of how Gadamer indicates a proximity between aesthetic and religious truth, the latter of which, at least within the Christian tradition, invokes a relation to metaphysics with a higher and superior truth beyond the mundane world. Gadamer explains that this "[t]ransformation is a transformation into the true" (2004, 112) and a "transformation back into true being. In being presented in play, what is emerges. It produces and brings to light what is otherwise constantly hidden and withdrawn" (2004, 112). Through the presentation of an artwork something true emerges that was previously unseen. For Gadamer, "the being of all play is always self-realization, sheer fulfillment, energeia which has its telos within itself" (2004, 112). This viewpoint reflects his presentational account of aesthetic experience, here emphasizing that the *telos* is derived within itself rather than being derived from something beyond it. So, put another way, for Gadamer the experience of art is like the experience of religious and metaphysical truth, but rather than such truth being reliant on a second more true world of Being, teleology, or some religious explanation, truth is now found within the experience of an artwork.

For Gadamer, aesthetic experience is potentially a radical experience of truth that is superior to the experience of ordinary reality and Gadamer adopts a Hegelian voice when he explains that "the concept of transformation characterizes the independent and superior mode of being of what we called structure. From this viewpoint 'reality' is defined as what is untransformed, and art as the raising up (Aufhebung) of this reality into truth" (2004, 112). Here Gadamer places primacy on the truth of heightened aesthetic experience and how it can transform us. But the act of drawing upon a metaphysical thinker such as Hegel puts back into a proximity with

[114] For Hadot the experience of ancient philosophy as a way of life was one of conversion, where the philosopher left the regular cultural values and their understanding of themselves behind. In this respect, I would suggest that the way that Gadamer approaches aesthetic experience is akin to this in various ways. For both Hadot and Gadamer, this conversion is not a one-time affair, but rather is an ongoing process of self-development.

metaphysics; for example, Hegel 'backs' his understanding of truth with the metaphysics of the Absolute that stands in itself. Gadamer points to an experience of truth, although this is more modest and not in such an absolute or foundational way.

Gadamer also relates the experience of artwork to a process of recognition where we recognize something of ourselves. However, for Gadamer, rather than this being something that one recognizes again, "the joy of recognition is rather the joy of knowing *more* than is already familiar" (2004, 113). Here we again see the motif of increase for Gadamer, and how such a remembrance is productive. Gadamer points to how recognition implies a movement past the contingent to the essential, where something is "grasped in its essence" and observes that "[t]his is the central motif of Platonism" (2004, 113). Gadamer goes on to remark that "[i]n his theory of anamnesis[115] Plato combined the mythical idea of remembrance with his dialectic, which sought the truth of being in the logoi—i.e. the ideality of language" (2004, 113). Now, in Plato's thought as traditionally conceived, such a remembrance is that of the Forms and true Being, whereas for Gadamer this is an experience of heightened truth through language and aesthetic experience. Gadamer's point here is that through recognition there is a detachment from accidental aspects which allows the essential to emerge: "[T]he presentation of the essence, far from being a mere imitation, is necessarily revelatory. In imitating, one has to leave out and to heighten" (2004, 114). There is a creative and productive aspect to this, so that, for example, as a play is repeatedly presented it evolves in new and creative ways. For Gadamer, such remembering takes place within our experience of language and tradition and "theatrical presentation calls up something that is at work in all of us even if we are unaware of it" (1986b, 61). Such an experience points to an immanent possibility which goes unnoticed by most, but which may be revealed in a play or artwork.

In this brief account of Gadamer's aesthetics we can see the importance of presentation and relational experience to promote a practical orientation encouraging self-transformation through the experience of a greater whole. Although Gadamer resists the implications of idealistic aesthetics that tries to capture all meaning within the concept (Hegel) and perspectives that tend to relegate the material and human world to a mere imitation (Plato, as

[115] *Anamnesis* is usually translated as recollection or remembrance.

traditionally understood), he also harks back to Hegel and Plato to underpin important aspects of his aesthetics such as his account of transformation into structure, the beautiful, recognition, and *anamnesis*. We have also noted the proximity of Gadamer's thought to religious truth. Gadamer is also influenced by Heidegger with his ontological and linguistic orientation and emphasis on concealing, revealing, and obscurity.

Here we have, in a nutshell, a prime example of the difficulty of interpreting Gadamer, as it is very difficult to reconcile these tensions between linguistically based ontology and the metaphysical theories he draws upon (and also distances his own views from). Nevertheless, there is a concerted effort in Gadamer's thought to encourage intensified relational experience within his aesthetics, an undertaking that has a proximity to metaphysical and religious thought and Gadamer's aesthetics may be seen as an attempt to provide a present-day discourse that that attempts to foster an appreciation for classical conceptions of order and harmony in ways that are relevant for contemporary thought. Cultivating the possibility of recognition and experiences of interconnection through conceptions such as the symbol, festival, and relational viewpoints found more generally in Gadamer's thought may be seen as primary Gadamerian practices to promote self-transformation. Gadamer's aesthetic conceptions provide a contemporary discourse around experiences of transcendence and interconnection, and as such may be very helpful in terms of articulating the experiences of transcendence that Hadot finds so important as part of philosophy as a way of life in a contemporary context.

Emerson's Aesthetic and Spiritual Viewpoints

Just as Gadamer provides a variety of approaches that encourage experiences of holism and transcendence, Emerson employs various approaches within his aesthetic and spiritual conceptions that help encourage relational perspectives that move past our ordinary and habitual experiences of the world. Emerson's use of the symbol, analogy, and metaphor will be explored below.

Symbol

For Emerson, a symbol is something that encourages relational perspectives beyond our ordinary experience of reality.[116] Symbolic experience may lead to what could be considered as a type of awakening and transformation; for example, in his essay "The Poet," Emerson writes: "The use of symbols has a certain power of emancipation and exhilaration for all men. […] We are like persons who come out of a cave or cellar into the open air. This is the effect on us of tropes, fables, oracles, and all poetic forms. Poets are thus liberating gods" (1983, 461). Here we can see, as with Gadamer, poetic truth is liberating and transformational. According to Emerson, it is from within the lived experience of the ordinary that we may draw out the more profound aspects of reality, and he notes that "the highest minds of the world have never ceased to explore the double meaning, or, shall I say, the quadruple, or the centuple, or more manifold meaning, of every sensuous fact" (1983, 447). The sensuous world of particulars is an entry point for symbolic and relational experience more generally. The greater whole is not something separated from us; rather, we are interconnected with it and Emerson notes that "we are not pans and barrows, nor even porters of the fire and torch-bearers, but children of the fire, made of it, and only the divinity transmuted, and at two or three removes, when we know least about it" (1983, 447). Put another way, we are part of a greater whole but are not ordinarily aware of it; for example, like Gadamer's conception of the symbol and festival, an experience of greater relationality is an immanent possibility. In Emerson's view, there is a possibility for each person to move past limited and isolated conceptions of self towards a greater holistic experience of their own infinitude, a process of self-realization that seemingly blurs the line between humankind and the Divine.[117] For Emerson, the poet is representative as an example of what we all may potentially become, and he points the way for our own emancipation. When the poet draws upon and creates symbols and poetry this helps others realize such experience for themselves. Although in Emerson's view we all potentially should be able to do this, we lack this

[116] See for example see Matthiessen (1968), Hopkins (1965), Packer (1982) and Van Cromphout (1999) for considerations of Emerson's conception of the symbol.

[117] See Chapter 6 where parallels between Emerson's "infinitude of the private man" and the ancient philosophical attempt to become like God are considered. Whereas Emerson emphasizes our infinitude, Gadamer emphasizes our finitude.

ability in practice and the Poet can help liberate others. However, this is not a call to rely on the Poet, as this would conflict with self-reliance, but rather should be seen as an example of how the Poet may remind us of our own potential.

A crucial aspect of Emerson's perspective is that each part is in every other; as he writes in *Nature*, "[a] leaf, a drop, a crystal, a moment of time is related to the whole, and partakes of the perfection of the whole. Each particle is a microcosm and faithfully renders the likeness of the world" (1983, 29-30). This parallels the relationality that is found in Gadamer's conception of the symbol, the hermeneutic circle and language, where poetic language is the eminent example of this speculative relation. Emerson, in the chapter "Beauty" from *The Conduct of Life*, points to how experiences of relationality are powerful experiences that helps break one away from habitual and ordinary outlooks:

> The feat of the imagination is in showing the convertibility of every thing into every other thing. Facts which had never before left their stark common sense, suddenly figure as Eleusinian mysteries. My boots and chair and candlestick are fairies in disguise, meteors and constellations. All the facts in Nature are nouns of the intellect, and make the grammar of the eternal language. Every word has a double, treble, or centuple use and meaning. What! Has my stove and pepper-pot a false bottom! I cry you mercy, good shoe-box! I did not know you were a jewel case. Chaff and dust begin to sparkle, and are clothed about with immortality. And there is a joy in perceiving the representative or symbolic character of a fact, which no bare fact or event can ever give. There are no days in life so memorable as those which vibrated to some stroke of the imagination. (1983, 1111)

Here we can see how for Emerson we are led from the common and factual through the help of our imagination and symbolic perspectives, which he associates with the eternal and a higher intellect, a seemingly more potent, "eternal language". In this respect, we should be reminded that the word hermeneutics stems from Hermes who was the mediator between the Gods and mankind, and that for Emerson our potential needs to be mediated back into the everyday. The normal experiences of the understanding are brought into question and play, which leads towards more relational and profound experience of the divine. This experience stems from our openness to experiencing things more deeply. Interestingly, like Gadamer, Emerson

draws upon both an example of translation[118] and the beautiful: "The laws of this translation we do not know, or why one feature or gesture enchants, why one word or syllable intoxicates, [it is] as if the Divinity, in his approaches, lifts away mountains of obstruction, and deigns to draw a truer line, which the mind knows and owns. This is the haughty force of beauty" (1983, 1111-12). Here we see a 'translation' from an ordinary experience towards the extraordinary and the role that the beautiful plays in this process. For Emerson, beauty is one way that may encourage an experience of the symbolic, more relational, and Divine, and as discussed above, Gadamer associates the beautiful as overcoming the gap between the visible and invisible and fostering the experience of greater interconnection, harmony, and of the holy. In this respect, the experience of beauty serves a common role for Gadamer and Emerson to lead us from the visible and initially apparent towards experiences of the invisible and heightened experiences and relational viewpoints that may emerge.

As Emerson writes in "The Poet," symbols open up diverse possibilities of experience and they change and evolve through history: "[T]he artist must employ the symbols in use in his day and nation, to convey his enlarged sense to his fellow-men. Thus the new in art is always formed out of the old" (1983, 431). For Emerson, symbols are fluid and malleable rather than fixed. Although in *Nature* his examples can sometimes take on a fixed relation of analogy (e.g. a river represents the flux of time), in his essay "The Poet," he criticizes a rigid understanding of the symbol that would apply to every person in the same way and contends that different symbols may serve for each person and symbols "must be held lightly, and be very willingly translated into the equivalent terms which others use" (1983, 464). Emerson embraces a more flexible range of dynamic symbolism that moves beyond what he sees as a too rigid approach to symbols employed by mystics.[119]

[118] Gadamer (2004) draws upon translation between two languages in his conception of understanding. See also Chapter 6 where Gadamer's model of translation is briefly considered.

[119] In the chapter "Swedenborg; or, the Mystic" in his book *Representative Men*, Emerson generally speaks positively of Emanuel Swedenborg's ability to move beyond the factual to spiritual meaning, but also criticizes him, such as when he writes: "Swedenborg's system of the world wants central spontaneity; it is dynamic, not vital, and lacks power to generate life. There is no individual in it. The universe is a gigantic crystal, all whose atoms and laminæ lie in uninterrupted order, and with unbroken unity, but cold and still. What seems

Emerson's approach to symbols articulates how a dynamic part participates in a greater whole, which reflects the importance of both individual vantage points which are entry points for more universal experiences of truth.

The process of poetic and symbolic experience has a number of facets for Emerson that relate to his thought more generally. The first is that such experiences are often quite receptive in nature. For example, he writes that

> poetry was all written before time was, and whenever we are so finely organized that we can penetrate into that region where the air is music, we hear those primal warblings, and attempt to write them down, but we lose ever and anon a word, or a verse, and substitute something of our own, and thus miswrite the poem. (1983, 449)

Here something is passively received and an expression risks being "mistranslated," and is akin to the receptive aspects of his thought we explored in Chapter 4. However, this is not the only approach, as there are also more creative aspects as also saw in Chapter 4. Such creativity finds parallel with the type of productive emergence we find within Gadamer's thought.

Experiencing nature poetically is something that can open us to the deeper aspects of ourselves and the spiritual experience of a higher Mind. When he considers the poet's experience of nature, Emerson writes:

> Nature offers all her creatures to him as a picture-language. Being used as a type, a second wonderful value appears in the object, far better than its old value, as the carpenter's stretched cord, if you hold your ear close enough, is musical in the breeze. "Things more excellent than every image," says Iamblichus, "are expressed through images." Things admit of being used as symbols, because nature is a symbol, in the whole, and in every part. Every line we can draw in the sand, has expression; and there is no body without its spirit or genius.[120] (1983, 452)

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an individual and a will, is none" (1983, 682). He later notes: "The vice of Swedenborg's mind is its theological determinism" (1983, 683). Thus, although Swedenborg inspired Emerson, in his view his approach lacks flexibility. In contrast, symbolic experience for Emerson is something more flexible and dynamic.

[120] Iamblichus was an influential Neo-Platonic thinker from the third century A.D. As we have seen in Chapter 4, Emerson was influenced by Neo-Platonic thought more generally.

If we start with the image that we have of an object, this can be engaged symbolically to help move towards other aspects than the image itself.[121] Through the natural and visible, the previously invisible and unsaid may be revealed. Nature and our everyday world are potentially symbolic, but we are caught up in superficiality rather than realizing the richer inherent quality of life that may be experienced. In fact, for Emerson we ourselves are symbols (1983, 456) and may tap into far greater experiences of unity. Said another way, we are impoverished by our over-attachment to superficial experiences of the visible and apparent and limiting self-conceptions that are at odds with our potential "infinitude of the private man," and in Emerson's view we should creatively work towards manifesting this potential.[122] Perhaps we could say there is an impetus to live more symbolically as a way of life. In my view, this attempt finds clear parallels with Gadamer's considerations of the symbol and festival, although Gadamer couches his conceptions within a discourse of human finitude. Furthermore, the impetus of Gadamer's thought to move past or through the contingent to the essential finds commonality with Emerson's approach to a finding something more profound beyond our initial experience of the factual. We will consider these commonalities further below.

Analogy/Correspondence

As we pointed to in Chapter 4, according to Emerson, like is known by like. There is a sympathy and interconnection running through reality and analogies from the sensual world can help open us to truths about the supersensible. According to Greenham, "[a]nalogy, is, along with reason and understanding, among the most important elements of Emerson's intellectual perspective" (2012, 107). Analogy allows Emerson to move from the factual to the spiritual and the framework that metaphysically holds this together is that everything is interconnected within a Universal Mind. This Mind is not something outside of us but is something that we contribute to and co-create. Nature is a manifestation of this mind and our interactions with nature can

[121] See below for a brief suggestion for how this could be approached as a practice.

[122] Put another way, we could say that just as Gadamer sees statements with a fixed relation between subject and object (the said) as limiting and encourages a speculative relation to a greater whole (the unsaid potential), here for Emerson the experience of our own infinitude and the Divine breaks us past our limited self-conceptions, working from the seen or visible towards the unseen or invisible.

lead us back to ourselves. Greenham points to how "[t]he moral and the material worlds are, for Emerson, strictly analogous" (2012, 108). Through encountering nature analogously, we learn about morality and ourselves.

In the essay "Poetry and Imagination," Emerson point to how we are to look to nature with imagination and from the viewpoint of analogy:

> For the value of a trope is that the hearer is one: and indeed Nature is a vast trope, and all particular natures are tropes. As the bird alights on the bough, then plunges into the air again, so the thoughts of God pause but for a moment in any form. All thinking is analogizing, and it is the use of life to learn metonymy. The endless passing of one element into new forms, the incessant metamorphosis, explains the rank which the imagination holds in our catalogue of mental powers. The imagination is the reader of these forms. (*CW8*, 7-8)

As we have discussed, Emerson encourages breaking through and past discursive experiences of the material world towards a more fluid and spiritual relation of Mind.

Even in his earlier work that reference God, this is not just a matter of finding the Ideas of God in nature but finding ourselves as a part of a greater whole and the Divine. Greenham writes in respect to passages found in Emerson's *Nature* that "for Emerson though nature is scripture, as with revelation it needs a certain attitude to read its truth" (2012, 118). As Greenham goes on to explain, Emerson's position "is not straightforwardly deist, as nature remains co-created by our relationship with it, not merely a design of God which points to his unseen presence" (2012, 118). As discussed previously, for Emerson there is a unity between the Divine and human mind in such a way that as we deeply experience nature, we are led back into ourselves in our divine potential. Working from analogy is a more systematic approach than symbols as it relates to a direct correspondence. For Emerson there is an order running through Nature which we can both attune to and in fact co-create with. We will explore Emerson's conception of Nature in more detail in Chapter 7. A main point to be taken from our current considerations is that analogical and symbolic experience serve as approaches to transcend our ordinary understanding of the world and may be seen as practices as part of a philosophical way of life.

Metaphor and Creative Connections

Metaphor develops new connections between words that moves beyond ordinary language use and surpasses and transcends the literal use of language. The use of metaphor brings out hidden similarities or creates new relations that were not seen before and is a creative process that changes and expands language. Through establishing new ways of using and relating words, different aspects of reality may be revealed. Emerson explains: "Nothing so marks a man as imaginative expressions. A figurative statement arrests attention, and is remembered and repeated. […] Genius thus makes the transfer from one part of Nature to a remote part, and betrays the rhymes and echoes that pole makes with pole" (*CW8,* 6). The Genius of the Poet opens up new relations and experiences of reality past the prose of the everyday, and, as discussed above, in Emerson's view we all have some potential to be a Poet. The symbolic, metaphoric and analogic are all approaches that encourage intensified relational experience and self-transformation.

Gadamer highlights the living, moving, and evolving metaphorical aspects of language in contrast to attempts to conceive language logically, and he explains that the metaphorical side of language has been marginalized (2004, 431). These metaphorical aspects of language contribute to its creativity and Gadamer's emphasizes the ambiguous and flexible nature of language, the most creative of which is the speculative and poetic. Joel Weinsheimer points to the importance of metaphor in Gadamer's thought:

> If thought is indivisible from language, then thought is more fundamentally metaphorical than logical. Metaphor is a specifically linguistic process of concept formation (*Bildung*), since a concept is altered and expanded when a *word* is transferred from one thing to another so that the new thing becomes intelligible. (1985, 238)

Here we can see how metaphor may help break beyond the confines of the propositional use of language and point to more creative and speculative possibilities. According to Weinsheimer, "metaphor offers a paradigm of the hermeneutic circle, a model of the fusion of horizons, the analogue of tradition" (1985, 240), which points to the broad role of metaphorical conceptions in Gadamer's hermeneutics. The way Emerson's uses symbol, analogy and metaphor to develop creative and more relational points of view indicates an important commonality between Emerson's and Gadamer's

thought. Likewise, they share a mutual emphasis on the relation between part and whole. This is a crucial conception, as it allows for a more dynamic relationality between particular and universal; instead of a model of a universal genus subsuming a particular instance, the particular now participates and co-evolves in the universal and the universal in the particular, a form of play.[123]

Greenham (2016b) explores Emerson's use of metaphors and his need to move past custom and the habitual use of language.[124] He explains that "the power to create tends to lay dormant, waiting in the language for the right speaker. Waiting, that is, for the Poet to make the crucial connection between part and whole that will re-awaken language" (2016b, 112). Put within Gadamer's terminology, the poet taps into the unsaid, an immanent and speculative possibility of language that relates to the whole.[125] This is a creative process, and Emerson writes in his essay "Poetry and Imagination" that "[t]he reason we set so high a value on any poetry,—as often on a line or a phrase as on a poem,—is, that it is a new work of Nature, as man is. It must be as new as foam and as old as the rock" (*CW8*, 21), which points to the innovative aspects of linguistic experience. Greenham notes that "[c]reation is not merely the incremental recasting of others' words; it is the novel use of these words […] as living metaphors to open new grounds. It is having something new to say and thus participating in creation itself. To create, for Emerson, is always to become one with the divine; and it is only by becoming a conduit for the divine that the poet becomes original" (2016b,

[123] Gadamer explains that "speaking is never just subsuming individual things under universal concepts. In using words what is given to the senses is not put at our disposal as an individual case of a universal; it is itself made present in what is said—just as the idea of the beautiful is present in what is beautiful" (2004, 483). Put another way, there is a play between part and whole.

[124] According to Greenham (2018), although the critical tradition has not ignored the role of metaphor in Emerson's thought, it has not been central to Emersonian interpretation. See Greenham (2018) for a review of previous interpretations of Emerson that consider the role of metaphor in his thought. Greenham points to the importance of metaphor for Emerson's thought and examines the creative ways that Emerson uses the metaphors in his essay "Circles" to promote the transformation of the reader.

[125] As we have pointed to above, for Emerson the unsaid relates to the soul, so we could within this framework of terminology say that finding the right word connects and re-awakens our connection to our soul and the possibility of creative expression.

113).[126] Metaphors are an important part of this re-awakening towards a more fluid and dynamic experience of language and our experience of reality. Greenham notes that "the very fact that language is metaphorical by nature has, for Emerson, the potential for liberation; a new metaphor opens up a new relation: what is needed to generate new metaphors is merely a new angle of vision, a new take on nature itself" (2016b, 110).[127] Generating new metaphors revitalizes language to promote new experiences, and in this sense Emerson and Gadamer would come quite close in respect to the creative and fluid nature of language.[128] Greenham explains that for Emerson "any poetic description will necessarily re-inscribe […] inner life as something else than it was before. That is the purpose of poetry" (2016b, 118). Thus, poetry is something that can lead to self-transformation through the dynamic and creative use of language and symbolic creation, which I suggest may be seen as a practice as part of philosophy as a way of life in a contemporary context.[129] For Emerson, a poet is someone who receives and creatively translates insight through his poetic expression. In this respect, an important aspect of Gadamer's thought is to draw upon tradition, and for example the poetry found there can inspire us. This too plays a role for Emerson, but he emphasizes cultivating the poetic and creative aspects of ourselves rather than drawing upon the poetry of others. In conclusion, when we look at

[126] In this respect, it is worth recalling that for Gadamer language speaks through us, creative production largely comes from beyond the conscious will, and art takes on a quasi-religious capacity in his thought, which has parallels with Emerson's understanding of humans beings as conduits for the divine. As we shall see in Chapter 7, for Gadamer language takes on aspects of the role of God or a Divine Mind played in ancient thought in a way that reflects our human finitude.

[127] Greenham (2018) also points to the possibility of revitalizing existing metaphors to renew oneself.

[128] Keeping in mind that for Emerson language has its limitations.

[129] Interestingly, Gadamer distances the use of metaphor from the poetic: "In a poem, metaphor is so bound up with the play of sounds, word meanings, and the meaning of the discourse that it does not really stand out as metaphor. For in a poem the prose of ordinary discourse is not found at all. Even in prose poetry [*dichterische Prosa*] metaphor scarcely has a place. Metaphor disappears when intellectual insight which it serves is awakened. Actually, rhetoric is the realm where metaphor holds sway. In rhetoric one enjoys metaphor as metaphor. In poetry, a theory of metaphor as little deserves a place of honor as a theory of word-play" (1989b, 46). Gadamer's point seems to be that metaphor ideally disappears into meaning and intellectual insight like the poetic word, but often may not achieve this and contains some residual discursivity.

symbol, analogy, and metaphor in Emerson's thought, they all work towards promoting new, more profound, and generally more holistic experiences that may transform us.

The Proximity of Gadamer's and Emerson's Aesthetic Perspectives

Symbolic and metaphorical perspectives, poetic thought and language, the general importance of the relation between part and whole, and the encouragement of intensified experiences of relationality that may result in self-transformation are common viewpoints found in Gadamer's and Emerson's thought. However, there are differences in their conceptions. Gadamer's symbol is presentational, meaning that it stands in itself and presents and embodies whatever comes through it. Additionally, Gadamer points to the obscurity of the symbol which he associates with Goethe's conception of the symbol.[130] Van Cromphout compares Emerson's conception of the symbol to Goethe's and points to Emerson's conception as being more transcendent, transparent and transferable (1990, 69-70); so, using Goethe as a point of measure, Emerson's conception of the symbol points to more possible transparency than Gadamer's. Gadamer's account is more grounded within the tangible form that the symbol takes and emphasizes obscurity, whereas for Emerson the symbol tends to point beyond itself and offers more potential transparency. However, we can find examples from Emerson that indicate more presentational viewpoints. For example, in the late essay "Poetry and Imagination" he points to how in poetry "a verse is not a vehicle to carry a sentence as a jewel is carried in a case: the verse must be alive, and inseparable from its contents, as the soul of man inspires and directs the body, and we measure the inspiration by the music," (*CW8*, 29) which would seem to indicate a unity between meaning and its form of presentation.[131] As with Gadamer, language here is not

[130] Gadamer states: "The impossibility of surveying all relations is just as much present in Goethe's concept of the symbolic as is the vicarious function of the particular for the representations of the whole. For only because the universal relatedness of being is concealed does it need to be discovered" (2008, 103),

[131] Even in an early essay such as the 1841 "Spiritual Laws" we may find an expression of strong appreciation for our manifestation or 'presentation': "I desire not to disgrace the soul. The fact that I am here certainly shows me that the soul had need of an organ here. Shall I not assume the post?" (1983, 321).

merely an instrument that points beyond itself to something else, but rather what is appears within the poetic verse itself. This description of Emerson's actually seems to run close to Gadamer's vision of poetic truth that stands in itself and provides an example of the immanent tendencies of Emerson's transcendentalism. This account sounds quite 'presentational' in its appreciation for the importance of the voice itself and its connection to the bodily provides a counterpoint to Emerson's emphasis on transcendence, but overall and not unexpectedly, I would conclude that Emerson the Transcendentalist has a more transcendent conception of the symbol than Gadamer, whose conception is more grounded within the facticity of symbolic presentations.

Given how notions of the divine and eternal run through Emerson's conceptions, we might think that there is a strong parting between Gadamer and Emerson with Gadamer's emphasis on human finitude and tradition. However, this difference may not be so clear-cut. For example, Gadamer explains that the poetic word

> does not describe or signify an entity, but opens up a world of the divine and human for us. The poetic statement is speculative inasmuch as it does not reflect an existent reality, does not reproduce the appearance of the *species* (Lat.) in the order of essence, but represents the new appearance of a new world in the imaginary medium of poetic invention. (2004, 466)

Here we see another example of how Gadamer wishes to avoid association with presences (here an entity), but nevertheless there is an opening of a greater whole which he relates with the divine.[132] For example, Gadamer associates the experience of the cultic and divine in relation to festivals and experiences of the theatre and remarks that "the still vital essence of festive celebration is creation and elevation into a transformed state of being" (1986b, 59). Given our considerations above regarding how Gadamer draws upon both metaphysical and religious viewpoints in his consideration of aesthetics, it is not surprising that Gadamer (1986b) indicates a quasi-religious function for aesthetics and also points to the important role of aesthetics as a contemporary way of bringing out what was previously covered by metaphysics within philosophy in prior times: "I believe that the arts, taken as a whole, quietly govern the metaphysical

[132] See Lammi (2008) who explores Gadamer's conception of the divine.

heritage of our Western tradition" (2007, 195). In this respect, both Emerson and Gadamer are dealing with what could be considered spiritual viewpoints that traditionally have been covered under the auspices of metaphysics or religion. However, they do this through different lenses, Gadamer that of finitude and Emerson that of infinitude. Nevertheless, interconnection and relationality between part and whole are important to both thinkers. For Emerson, there is a stronger focus on the eternal; for example, he writes in the 1841 essay "Art": "Away with your nonsense of oil and easels, of marble and chisels: except to open your eyes to the masteries of eternal art, they are hypocritical rubbish" (1983, 434). For Gadamer art is an intensified experience of truth that seems to relate to what the metaphysical tradition conceives of 'eternal,' but he 'translates' this to reflect our finitude and historicity. Thus, as discussed above in respect to tarrying, it is the closest that we can come to eternity as finite beings. In respect to eminent texts, they are, if not eternal, more permanent in the sense that they are perpetually renewed classics within tradition. Nevertheless, although such texts are renewed historically, they a serve similar role in Gadamer's thought as the eternal does within Emerson's; they provide a measure of truth that is relatively 'permanent'. As we discussed above, for Emerson each historical time period requires its own symbols and poetic expression, which shows an appreciation for the need for renewing and finding new forms for truth to appear within tradition. For Gadamer, art is an intensifying process that leads away from everyday viewpoints, but this is not a separate realm and can be used to inform and evolve everyday outlooks. Similarly, for Emerson aesthetic and spiritual experience should not be seen as a separate realm but relates to a lived life. In this respect, I would suggest that the difference between Gadamer and Emerson is one of degree, and that there is, in fact, significant proximity between our two thinkers here.

Now, as we briefly discussed in the section on Gadamer above, symbolic experience involves moving away from the contingent towards the permanent which he associates with a process of recognition that "elicits the permanent from the transient. It is the proper function of the symbol and of the symbolic content of the language of art in general to accomplish this (1986b, 47). Earlier in the same essay, Gadamer writes of an "inner ear," and explains that "[t]he ideal creation only arises insofar as we ourselves actively transcend all contingent aspects" (1986b, 44) and that "[t]he process by which we liberate ourselves from such contingency defines the cooperative

part we have to play as participants in the play of art" (1986b, 44). Here we have a movement from the transient and contingent that breaks past ordinary conceptions of time in a reorientation to the poetic text through the inner ear. I would suggest that the symbol, inner ear, and process of recognition are all related, and it is through the experience of language, particularly poetic language, that this experience of the essential is promoted. This movement from the external and contingent towards the more permanent is something which links Gadamer to Emerson's emphasis on the transcendence of materiality to experience the spiritual.

Nevertheless, Gadamer´s orientation is one of finitude, and, as stated above and this bears repeating, for Gadamer the event of truth is ontological and occurs within language and the experience of self-understanding and meaning. For example, whereas in Plato's thought as it is generally interpreted truth lies in the world of Forms beyond the ordinary world of human affairs (and we should work towards becoming more 'godlike' to experience these truths), for Gadamer there is an experience of heightened truth found within artworks or poetry as it is expressed by people. Seen in this way, art takes on the role of generating truth and encouraging and justifying more holistic perspectives, replacing the role of God or Forms in ancient philosophical thought in a more modest way with the notion of poetic insight as it dynamically emerges within tradition as a creative act of human finitude. Although Emerson has been interpreted linguistically, there is an important role for metaphysics in his thought and given this, he has a closer affinity to these ancient conceptions than Gadamer (although for Emerson there is a stronger co-creative element than in ancient thought).[133] For Gadamer, we experience a greater whole by embracing our finitude and receiving, at best, glimpses of the whole which will always remain obscure to some extent. For Emerson, by embracing our infinitude, we potentially can experience, at least in heightened moments, more all-embracing viewpoints. Nevertheless, these experiences are normally fleeting, but

[133] Even with a linguistic reading of Emerson there still can be an important role for infinitude and aligning oneself with or becoming divine. For example, in his metaphorical analysis of Emerson's essay "Circles," Greenham (2018) points to how Emerson varies conventional metaphors to challenge limitations of the ideas of God and man and bring them into unanticipated alignment. For Emerson, we are creative by aligning ourselves with our own infinitude. Although Gadamer relates the human and the divine, our human finitude and limitation remains crucial for him.

Emerson generally emphasizes a far stronger possibility for practical power and progress towards more insight than Gadamer. Emerson's viewpoints are underpinned by metaphysics (see Urbas, 2016), whereas Gadamer, although drawing upon metaphysical theories, distances himself from such viewpoints when applying them to his own hermeneutics. Therefore, both Gadamer and Emerson encourage orientations to a greater whole, the former through the lens of finitude, the latter that of infinitude, and I suggest that each provides a helpful balance to help mitigate the potential excesses and limitations of the other viewpoint.

Practices from Plotinus to Encourage Relational Experience

Given the similarities between Emerson's and Gadamer's thought despite the differences in discourse, the application of their thought *in practice* may lead in similar directions. This similarity may be simply put as follows: they both encourage a transition and transcendence away from dogmatic and limited points of view towards more holistic perspectives and both have an important role for poetic and aesthetic experience in this respect. We will now turn to Plotinus as a thinker from later ancient thought for possible practices that may help encourage transcending our ordinary ways of experiencing the world. The reasoning for turning to Plotinus is that both Emerson and Gadamer are influenced by Plotinus' and Neo-Platonic viewpoints directly, and also because of the influence Neo-Platonism had on Romanticism and German Idealism and the subsequent influence these movements had on Gadamer and Emerson. As we saw in Chapter 4, Emerson's distinction between the intuitive experience of reason and discursive experience of the understanding was influenced by these viewpoints. Plotinus couches these practices within a discourse of metaphysics, and I will follow Hadot's approach of detaching a practice from its original discourse in ancient thought, meaning a practice will lead to its own results irrespective of the original discourse behind it. In this case, we are looking for exercises that may help free thought and language from habitual pathways.

As we have seen in previous chapters, Hadot points to the importance of experiences of transcendence and universality in ancient thought. As we have also seen, Emerson and Gadamer have a crucial role for intensified experiences of unity, as does Plotinus as we saw in Chapter 4. Although

Emerson uses more metaphysically inspired notions such as soul and the eternal inspired by Neo-Platonism and Gadamer draws on the more finite perspectives of language and tradition, there are commonalities in their thought. Emerson states that the soul "is undefinable, unmeasurable, but we know that it pervades and contains us" (1983, 387). Likewise, it could be said that for Gadamer our language and tradition "pervades and contains us". Emerson, Plotinus, and Gadamer are all promoting a transcendence towards greater unity, but while the two former thinkers frame this within the auspices of the soul and the intelligible realm, for Gadamer this is through language and tradition (which also plays a role in Emerson's thought as well).

For Plotinus, one of the challenges of moving towards heightened experiences of self and reality consists in the fact that we have been habituated to think in terms of space and time. From this point of view, many things in physical reality seem separate with distances between them. However, according to Plotinus, in the intelligible realm there is no physical space. Thus, our traditional conceptions of space and distance can be brought into question, and here is an exercise that seems geared towards this end:

> We begin by posing space, a place, a Chaos; into this container, whether conceived in our imagination as created or pre-existent, we introduce God and proceed to inquire: we ask, for example, whence and how He comes to be there: we investigate the presence and quality of this new-comer projected into the midst of things here from some height or depth. But the difficulty disappears if we eliminate all space before we attempt to conceive God: He must not be set in anything either as enthroned in eternal immanence or as having made some entry into things: He is to be conceived as existing alone, in that existence which the necessity of discussion forces us to attribute to Him, with space and all the rest as later than Him – space latest of all. Thus we conceive, as far as we may, the spaceless; we abolish the notion of any environment: we circumscribe Him within no limit; we attribute no extension to Him; He has no quality since no shape, even shape Intellectual; He holds no relationship but exists in and for Himself before anything is. (1991, 523-524, VI.8.11)

This seems designed to help overcome the natural tendency of attempting to conceive in terms of our normal sense of space in the external world and could be taken as a type of spiritual exercise. Here God is not something contained within physical objects or forms but something that precedes this. In respect to time, for Plotinus it is produced at the level of

Soul as a reflection or image of the true being of the Intelligible world and Plotinus explains that in order to bring the Cosmos known to the senses into being, "the Soul first laid aside its eternity and clothed itself with Time" (1991, 227, III.7.11). Instead of an instantaneous and clear understanding, a discursive and successive understanding is created at this level. As we saw in Chapter 4, there is a distinction for Plotinus between discursive thought that takes place in time and the experience of Intellect beyond time, which has a commonality with Emerson's distinction between discursive understanding and the direct intuitive experience of reason. This also finds parallels with Gadamer's prioritizing of speculative and poetic language over linguistic understanding that is limited to a statement and fixed relation between subject and object. Both Gadamer and Emerson point towards heightened aesthetic and spiritual experiences beyond representational perspectives and subject-object dualism. Emerson in particular points to abandonment to an object[134] and Gadamer points in a similar direction, although he indicates this this is never a complete coincidence between subject and object.[135]

Plotinus employs a variety of descriptions and analogies to help us make this transition from habitual discursive and materialistic conceptions. According to Plotinus, "[t]he Soul is to extend throughout the Universe, no spot void of its energy" (1991, 238, III.8.5). The soul may be seen as a link between disparate and seemingly discrete entities found in the physical world. Of course, this perspective may be quite different than our ordinary way of experiencing the world and Plotinus provides an image to consider in relation to the Cosmos and soul which may be helpful:

> The Cosmos is like a net which takes all its life, as far as ever it stretches, from being wet in the water; it is at the mercy of the sea which spreads out, taking

[134] In his essay "Circles," Emerson writes that "[n]othing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm. The way of life is wonderful: it is by abandonment" (1983, 414).

[135] Gadamer's point relates to our human finitude and how we may never overcome all our prejudices. When Emerson writes in his essay "Circles," as we have cited in Chapter 2, that "[t]he life of man is a self-evolving circle, which, from a ring imperceptibly small, rushes on all sides outwards to new and larger circles, and that without end" (1983, 404), this may point to a way beyond Gadamer's contention that there never may be a complete coincidence. What I mean is that at a certain level or circle of understanding it may seem that there is a complete coincidence and self-annihilation, but when seen from the perspective of a greater circle or whole, such is merely a partial coincidence between subject and object.

> the net with it just so far as it will go, for no mesh of it can strain beyond its set place: the Soul is of so far-reaching a nature – a thing unbounded – as to embrace the entire body of the All in the one extension; so far as the universe extends, there soul is; and if the universe had no existence, the extent of soul would be the same; it is eternally what it is. (1991, 263, IV.3.9)

This can be seen as a type of image for contemplation to help free the mind from its habitual directions. And just as the Cosmos is like a net (and seemingly the soul as well), we could also say that language, too, points to the linguistic possibility that moves beyond the representational towards a more fluid and relational metaphoric and poetic viewpoints. This is a perspective that contrasts with common assumptions that may see individual material things as very solid, separated and differentiated objects with distances between them with little or no interconnection (subject-object dualism) and the propositional use of language which may support these distinctions. Plotinus' conception is very different from relations of physical space, with the higher levels of the One, Intellect and Soul creating the physical cosmos, and in respect to Intellect and Soul, "[n]othing, in fact, is far away from anything; things are not remote: there is, no doubt, the aloofness of difference and of mingled natures as against the unmingled; but selfhood has nothing to do with spatial position, and in unity itself there may still be distinction" (1991, 265, IV.3.11). Emerson writes of a radical interconnection in terms of the soul as the following passage, part of a more extensive passage cited previously in Chapter 4, attests: "For, the sense of being which in calm hours rises, we know not how, in the soul, is not diverse from things, from space, from light, from time, from man, but one with them, and proceeds obviously from the same source whence their life and being also proceed" (1983, 269). Here we can clearly see that heightened experiences of unity are crucial for both Plotinus and Emerson.

It is natural when beginning to attempt to conceive Soul or *Nous* (or for that matter, poetic language) to do so in a regular way of thinking; that is, related to space and time and how this is represented in thought or the ordinary use of language.[136] The perspectives and practices mentioned above

[136] See Rappe (2000) who considers the non-discursive aspects of Plotinus' thought. For example, Rappe explores how Plotinus draws upon the metaphor a transparent world and offers contemplative practices designed to promote non-discursive unitive experience. She explains that these contemplative practices are "designed to strengthen these intellectual qualities [concentration and insight] within the student and [Plotinus] employs a non-

may promote experiences that overcome subject/object dualism and undermine the dominance of discursive viewpoints. Whether we consider this through language or thought, there is an attempt move beyond commonly held conceptions of space and physical distance towards more fluid and relational perspectives. What I am suggesting is that, irrespective of the metaphysical theory that grounds Plotinus' thought and how this may relate to and diverge from both Gadamer and Emerson in respect to theory, *in practice* all three thinkers are working towards moving past discursive points of view to encourage more participatory experience in relation to a greater whole. In this respect, Plotinus' 'exercises' may possibly help both free the mind and use of language towards more intuitive and poetic turns, bringing fixed relations into question, which may in turn open the space for more creative metaphorical, symbolic and intuitive experiences that promote self-transformation. As we briefly discussed in Chapter 3, Hadot points to the distance of Plotinus' thought from ours in the present-day, and I hope that the potential practices that I have pointed to above may provide an example of his relevance to the present.

Aesthetic Experiences of Interconnection in Practice

Emerson and Gadamer promote experiencing greater unities through a variety of conceptions that may be seen as potential aesthetic or spiritual practices. In this respect, it is noteworthy that Hadot points to how aesthetics is a helpful approach for articulating the type of interconnection and unity important to ancient philosophy in a contemporary context (see Hadot, 1995).[137] Davey writes in respect to Gadamer's hermeneutics:

> Philosophical hermeneutics suggests an account of aesthetic attentiveness as a practice, a practice not concerned with a passive appreciation of art and its aesthetic qualities in any standard sense but with actively facilitating movement between significant semantic placeholders in the horizons of both the artwork and the spectator so as to promote the possibility of transformative experience. (2013, 3)

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discursive approach to that end. The self-disciplined effort of focusing the mind upon its object with intensity and attention is a feature of non-discursive thinking, since in this state, the subject and object of awareness must merge" (2000, 106).

[137] We will explore this further in Chapter 7.

It is with this emphasis on practice in mind that I would suggest that the notions of the symbol and the festival, along with Gadamer's conception of tarrying could be seen as potential practices that may help stimulate experiences that deepen self-understanding towards more relational outlooks. For Gadamer, through aesthetic experience we move beyond purposeful and regular intentionality by being more attentive to the symbolic and interconnected dimensions of life, and the experience of a festival can be seen as pointing to the possibilities for interconnection that are immanently possible but too often not manifested in daily life. In this respect, I would suggest that Gadamer's position implies cultivating more 'festive' perspectives more generally (rather than, for example, only waiting for festivals in order to be more festive); that is, learning to see unities and commonalities beyond the ordinary purposefulness and societal roles we may all play. In this respect, Emerson's transcendentalism has a variety of resources to encourage the questioning of custom and encouraging more relational perspectives.

Turning to the symbol, in Gadamer's view in our times we generally do not have access to what was given to former historical periods as a rich communal symbolic tradition; however, rather than accepting these unfavourable opportunities, Gadamer indicates that the "recognition of the symbolic is a task that we must take upon ourselves" (1986b, 47). That is, we must take the onus on ourselves to experience the symbolic and create or realize a sense of community of interconnection to a greater whole. I believe that Emerson would agree with this viewpoint, in that the Poet can bring new and innovative symbols to inspire the community. For Emerson, nature is a measure that can help orient us against the distortions of culture, and this includes helping direct us towards which symbols are fruitful. In Emerson's view, a poet may instantiate a symbol that can lead us into deeper insight and for Gadamer a symbol or artwork also opens up new possibilities for experience. In this respect, a symbolic practice could be seen as generating new symbols or drawing upon existing symbols and/or evolving them and working with symbols to encourage more relational experiences.

The Symbol of Water and Relationality

In order to help us understand what a symbolic practice may look like, it may be helpful to draw upon a specific image or symbol from the Western

philosophical tradition. The one I will choose to work with is that of water as an overflowing spring, source or fountain from Plotinus, as both Emerson and Gadamer are inspired by Neo-Platonic conceptions of emanation that are related to this. I will also draw upon water as a symbol more generally as Emerson uses images of water in various places throughout his works, which will help us expand our considerations of the figurative use of water that we considered earlier in this chapter in respect to Gadamer's thought.

A natural place to start this process is with Plotinus himself who uses the image of a spring to suggest a Principle above Intellect (the One):

> Imagine a spring that has no source outside itself; it gives itself to all the rivers, yet is never exhausted by what they take, but remains always integrally as it was; the tides that proceed from it are at one within it before they run their several ways, yet all, in some sense, know beforehand down what channels they will pour their streams.[138] (Plotinus, 1991, 245, III. 8. 10)

As was discussed in Chapter 1, Emerson points to the streaming and evolving movement within nature and that this emanates from "a metaphysical and eternal spring" (1983, 119), as he puts it in his essay "The Method of Nature". In his essay "The Over-Soul," he also draws upon water to indicate a flow from above which we may be receptive to and involves an interconnection to greater whole:

> As with events, so it is with thoughts. When I watch that flowing river, which, out of regions I see not, pours for a season its streams into me, I see that I am a pensioner; not a cause, but a surprised spectator of the ethereal water; that I

[138] Gadamer would likely want to avoid the "know beforehand down what channels they will pour their streams" aspect of this as too determined and teleological. Although Emerson points to obedience when writing about emanation in his essay "The Method of Nature," and he is clear that what is at stake for him "is unbroken obedience" (1983, 419), the creative aspects of Emerson's thought considered in Chapter 4 would indicate that the "channels" here under discussion would be dynamically co-created as they progress. In Chapter 4 we mentioned that Goodman (2010) maintains that the possibility of new creation leads Emerson beyond the Neo-Platonism that influences him, although Neo-Platonic perspectives still play an important role in his thought. This type of productive creativity would also lead Gadamer's thought beyond Neo-Platonism, and likewise it could be said that Neo-Platonism still plays an important role in his thought. For example, Carpenter (1994) maintains that although Gadamer was influenced by Heidegger in his account of the event of truth, the roots of Gadamer's view lie within Neo-Platonism and the Christian conception of the Incarnation. Order, beauty, and harmony play important roles in Emerson's, Gadamer's and Plotinus' thought.

> desire and look up, and put myself in the attitude of reception, but from some alien energy the visions come. (1983, 385)

Here Emerson highlights the receptive side to this experience. Water here could be seen as a multi-faceted symbol that indicates joining to a greater whole (rivulet to sea), a flowing movement of spiritual energy from above, and, in the form of a spring, overflowing and dynamic life. Gadamer also draws upon the Neo-Platonic conception of emanation in respect to his aesthetics, language, and tradition. For Gadamer, presentation of aesthetic works leads to enhanced experiences of truth, and as we saw above, according to Gadamer this leads to an increase of being which he associates with a spring or overflow from Neo-Platonism. Gadamer also returns to the conception of emanation later, i.e. in his discussion of the Inner Word in *Truth and Method*, which is associated with the image of a fountain which is not depleted in its flowing and emanation (2004, 422). In an appendix to *Truth and Method*, Gadamer relates emanation to the concept of a source: "As a *philosophical* metaphor it is of the Platonic and Neoplatonic origin. The dominant image is that of the springing up of pure and fresh water from invisible depths" (2004, 502) and he later explains, "[t]here is always fresh water pouring out of a source, and it is the same with the true sources of the human spirit that we find within tradition" (2004, 502). Given the importance of tradition for Gadamer, this indicates an important connection to Neo-Platonic thought.[139]

A work of art, the experience of language and most eminently poetic language, and engaging and interpreting tradition is a productive increase of being that is like the overflow of a fountain or source springing out of the One. Using an example of tradition and blending it with Emerson's conceptions, we could say that an individual work of literature, art, or philosophy is like a rivulet in a greater sea of tradition as a manifestation of the human spirit which is ever growing like a spring or source of water that wells up from the depths or flowing from above; either way it points to an overflowing and abundant sense of oneness. The symbol of water could be used as a practice to help remind how a particular perspective, text, or one's own self-understanding relates and interconnects to a greater whole which dynamically increases with participation.

[139] See Carpenter (1994) who maintains that Neo-Platonism plays an important role in Gadamer's thought, and, in his view this influence is generally underappreciated.

A symbolic practice with water could start with a thought, a word, an object in nature, etc. and involve an effort to move past both the physicality and the image we have of it. Experiences of greater relationality and new connections may be encouraged in a variety of ways. For example, in *Nature* Emerson suggests a connection between the elements and a unity running through reality:

> The granite is differenced in its laws only by the more or less of heat, from the river that wears it away. The river, as it flows, resembles the air that flows over it; the air resembles the light that traverses it with more subtile currents; the light resembles the heat which rides with it through Space. Each creature is only a modification of the other; the likeness in them is more than the difference, and their radical law is one and the same.[140] A rule of one art, or a law of one organization, holds true through nature. So intimate is this Unity, that, it is easily seen, it lies under the undermost garment of nature, and betrays its source in Universal Spirit. (1983, 30)

Although Emerson may not always be so optimistic in respect to the ease of this vision, this passage points to the possibility of seeing and experiencing such unities and I believe that it could be seen as a practice. For example, one may work to see the commonalities between rock, water, and air, or anything else in nature, which may open the door to new relations through metaphor, simile, symbol or otherwise, and something similar could be applied to the experience of tradition as well.[141] In relation to this, we could, for example, draw upon Plotinus' aforementioned image of a net to provide an image that may help encourage a greater appreciation for conceiving how such connections may occur. The act of creating metaphors and poetry could also play a role in this process.

In conclusion, a variety of approaches have here been suggested, taking their cue from Gadamer's and Emerson's thought, to help bring into our question our habitual ways of conceiving reality, and Plotinus has been drawn upon to point to practices that may support this effort. Although strong experiences of unity are important for both Gadamer and Emerson, this is not to rule out all difference, but rather to work against the excessive attachment to limiting points of view. In this respect, this broader approach can be seen in relation to earlier discussions of loosening prejudices in

[140] This sounds like a festive viewpoint.

[141] This would be a practice to help move beyond propositional thought.

respect to Gadamer in Chapter 2 and 3, where all prejudices cannot be dissolved, but they can become more open, fluid, and relational in a productive way. In a certain sense we might say, given our focus on water, that our ordinary prejudices and discursive perspectives tend to be quite rigid and 'icy,' and when we add 'fire' and intensify our thought this tends to 'melt' them, and our viewpoints may become more 'watery,' malleable and fluid. For example, Gadamer points out that establishing rigid terminology appropriate to science "is peculiarly suspect in relation to the realm of motion called philosophical thought" (2007, 35) and later notes that "the true rank of a thinker or of thinking is almost determinable according to how far the thinker or the thinking is able to break through the fossilization represented by the usages in the inherited philosophical language" (2007, 35).[142] Gadamer's point of engaging tradition is to renew and bring it alive in the present and the aesthetic and spiritual experiences pointed to in this chapter may help promotes the experience of more relational perspectives and support the flexibility of thought needed for this process.

[142] Emerson's statement in "The Poet" that "language is fossil poetry" (1983, 457) may be seen in the same vein.

Chapter 6 – The Experience of *Theoria* in Relation to Gadamer and Emerson

So far we have been examining a variety of practices, including those related to aesthetics, dialogue, reading, and interpretation. We will now examine the Greek conception of *theoria*, before turning to Gadamer's interpretation of *theoria* and considering what the "practice of *theoria*" might look like for him. Plato's famous Allegory of the Cave is discussed and related to Gadamer's thought. Emerson's thought is then explored in relation to *theoria* and philosophical practices are drawn from his writings.

Greek *Theoria* and Gadamer's thought

In my discussion of the Greek conception of *theoria*, I will be largely drawing upon Andrea Nightingale's general account of *theoria* and specifically Plato's conception of *theoria* from her book *Spectacles of Truth in Ancient Greek Philosophy*.[143] Philosophy first emerged as a discipline in the fourth century BCE and there was a need to define, legitimize and outline the scope of this new discipline and how it differed from other approaches to wisdom (Nightingale 2009, 3). From the debates at this time about the nature of philosophy and the highest type of knowledge, there was "generated (among other things) a novel and subversive claim: that the supreme form of wisdom is *theoria*, the rational 'vision' of metaphysical truths" (2009, 3). Nightingale explains that in order to give *theoria* legitimacy, it was related to the traditional practice of making a journey to spectacles and festivals and she distinguishes between two forms of *theoria*, the civic and the private. In respect to civic *theoria*, she explains that "[i]n many cases, the *theoros* [the person participating in the *theoria*] was sent by his city as an official ambassador: this 'civic' *theoros* journeyed to an oracular center or festival, viewed the events and spectacles there, and returned home with an official eyewitness report" (2009, 3). The private *theoros* only needed to answer to

[143] We will focus on Plato's conception of *theoria* as it is clear that his conception of *theoria* is related to practice whereas there is some scholarly debate about the connection between Aristotle's understanding of *theoria* and practice.

themselves, but for both private and civic *theoria*, the focal point was the act of seeing and witnessing, and Nightingale explains that "[t]his sacralized mode of spectating was a central element of traditional *theoria*, and offered a powerful model for the philosophic notion of 'seeing' diving truths" (2009, 4). Plato also drew on traditional *theoria* with its model of journeying, spectating and returning (2009, 4). For Plato, this conception involves a process of leaving behind or becoming "blind" to or forgetting the ordinary world for a time, which isn't a permanent withdrawal from the world, but a temporary vision from which there can be a re-orientation of oneself. Nightingale writes, "[i]n the *Republic*, Plato makes a paradoxical and controversial claim, namely, that turning away from the world of becoming and contemplating an unchanging reality will give us better insight and virtue in the earthly realm" (2009, 127). Nightingale maintains that such contemplation will not constrain the philosopher from practical action upon his return (2009, 127-128). Thus, this blindness to the world for Plato is temporary, allowing a re-engagement, and although Nightingale agrees with the perspective that "in the *Republic* Plato does not explain how metaphysical contemplation generates a moral theory with specific content," she goes on to maintain that:

> The practice of *theoria*, does, however, produce a moral agent who will be just and impartial in his dealings with the world, using the apprehension of the Forms as a "measure" for all his actions. The activity of contemplation transforms the philosopher epistemically, ethically, and erotically – he "returns" from his theoretical journey a changed man. (2009, 128)

Now, this does not mean that there is a perfect knowing, and Nightingale suggests that unlike an ideal philosopher who will achieve a complete journey in one go, "the human philosopher will spend his entire life shuttling back and forth between the human world and the Forms, and his vision of the Forms will be, at best, only partial" (2009, 105). These profound insights will change us and affect the philosopher, but there will never be a perfect seeing.

Nightingale states that "[m]ost twentieth century thinkers, of course, view Greek metaphysical philosophy with suspicion if not scorn. The conception of knowledge as *theoria* is, for some, a cowardly flight from the world of action and, for others, a pernicious power-grab posing as disinterested speculation" (2009, 7). Nightingale points to a passage from

Nietzsche which, according to her, clearly reflects some of the central claims made by modern and post-modern criticisms of the spectator theory of knowledge. She explains that in the passage he rejects conceptions such as a disembodied intellect, non-perspectival viewpoints, objective truth beyond that constructed by the human mind, and "the belief in a mode of cognition separated from will, desire, and the emotions" (2009, 8). However, Nightingale suggests that these criticisms do not do justice to the Greek conception of *theoria*. She explains that in Plato's understanding of *theoria*, *eros* and wonder play important roles in the experience of contemplation and that for Plato "*theoria* is fueled and sustained by erotic desire" (2009, 8), and points out that the theoretical philosopher's vision of *theoria* is partial and that the sight of beautiful human and celestial bodies plays a key role in the activity of *theoria* in some of his dialogues.[144] Nightingale maintains that most modern and postmodern criticisms of Greek *theoria* center around what is seen as a problematic spectatorial distance that allows the subject to stand over against the object. She explains that according to this line of thought a theoretical gaze objectifies what it views and encourages the domination and control of these objects, a viewpoint which has been extended to include political and technological domination (2009, 9-10). In Nightingale's view, these critiques are more relevant to Cartesian thinking and modern science than Greek theorizing. According to Nightingale, far from Greek theory being an abstract apprehension of an object at a distance, Greek philosophers sought to change themselves and to establish a kinship with metaphysical objects (2009, 10).[145] *Theoria* is thus a part of a philosophical and transformative way of life, where profound insights lead towards greater wisdom and changes in the philosopher.

[144] For example, Nightingale maintains that in the myths of the *Phaedrus* and the *Phaedo* the vision of beautiful bodily beings plays a key role in the activity of *theoria* (2009, 139). Nightingale also points to how the cosmological theory found in the *Timaeus*, "with its claim that the physical universe is good and divine – encourages the human theorist to take a closer look at the corporeal realm" (2009, 141). According to Nightingale, in the *Timaeus* the vision of the cosmos or astronomical *theoria* comes to play an important role alongside metaphysical *theoria*.

[145] For example, Aristotle remarks in the *Nicomachean Ethics* in respect to *theoria* that "this activity is the best (since not only is reason the best thing in us, but the objects of reason are the best of knowable objects)" (2001, 1177a20-22).

Gadamer's conception of *theoria* reflects the limitations and partial and ongoing nature of the insight of *theoria* that Nightingale highlights. However, his explanation for this is the inherent linguisticity that he finds in Greek thought (Gadamer 2004, 451), a viewpoint that corresponds with the crucial role that language plays in his own hermeneutics. For Gadamer, language is the universal medium and it is through language that we experience the world. Language on the one hand limits us and on the other hand opens us up to new possibilities of experience and the experience of *theoria* is also within language. Gadamer's view of *theoria* has strong parallels to Nightingale's viewpoint that *theoria* is a transformative experience rather than being abstract and disinterested, and Gadamer emphasizes *theoria* as a form of participation and enhanced presence.

According to Nightingale, an important aspect of the experience of theoretic contemplation was a re-defined sense of self and in relation to this she quotes Gadamer in respect to how *theoria* is an experience of the real, involves forgetting one's own purposes, is participatory and that being present is a kind of self-forgetfulness and abandonment to what one is watching (Nightingale 2009, 13). By reference to this idea, Nightingale goes on to question what kind of self we can associate with this self-forgetting and wonders, given that one is blind to the regular world when contemplating eternal beings, how this might relate to self-understanding. She explains:

> The fourth-century philosophers went in search of new kinds of selves. In particular, they reexamined the boundaries between the human and the divine, positing a kinship between human *nous* and divine and metaphysical beings. Departing from traditional Greek views, these philosophers introduced the notion of a theorizing self, which they defined in relation to metaphysical and divine beings and to the rationally organized cosmos. In placing the human being in this (new) relation to the divine, these philosophers developed a conception of human identity that was not socially or environmentally defined. (2009, 13-14)

Nightingale explains that Plato and Aristotle were fully aware that we are embodied beings living in a material world but that *theoria* was an orientation to the rational as the best aspect of our human self and that "the ancient philosophers invited people to conceive of themselves (and the world) in a whole new way" (2009, 14). Now, Gadamer arguably is also, to use Nightingale's term, in search of a "new kind of self," albeit one which would still be socially defined and within language but moving towards more

universality. One of the reasons why Gadamer draws upon the Greeks in his thought is that their perspective, reflected in conceptions such as *theoria*, provides an alternative possibility for experience beyond the subject/object dualism present in post-Cartesian thought (see Gadamer, 2004). However, for Gadamer this takes place through language rather than through a Divine Mind as in ancient thought.[146] Transitions such as these create challenges however, and in my view, one of the hardest tasks facing the interpreter of Gadamer is how he draws upon metaphysical theories yet tends to back away from their metaphysical aspects and, related to this, the way he combines strong notions of truth with human finitude. For example, Gadamer writes that "[l]ife […] is a unity of theory and practice that is the possibility and the duty of everyone. Disregarding oneself, regarding what is: that is the behavior of a cultivated, I might almost say a divine, consciousness," (Gadamer 1998, 35). If one were considering Plato, a conception such as this would be backed by the Forms as true Being. Gadamer also associates the experience of the artwork and his understanding of *theoria* with conceptions of the absolute (see Gadamer, 2007), which seems to bring out similar tensions. However, Gadamer's hermeneutics is an attempt to articulate the practice of moving towards more theoretic and universal perspectives and applying this experience dynamically back into our concrete situation.

According to Gadamer, ancient conceptions of theory are different from modern theoretical perspectives that stand back, observe, and seek to dominate, and he maintains that "'[t]heory' in the ancient sense […] is something quite different. There is not just that existing orders as such are contemplated, but 'theory' means sharing in the total order itself" (2004, 451). From Gadamer's point of view, *theoria* does not fall into presences that would be subject to Heidegger's critique of the metaphysics of presence and in fact would seem to imply a type of "letting be" given how he mentions that *theoria* maintains the dignity of a thing.[147] The experience of *theoria* for Gadamer seems to be a type of enhanced awareness and relationality rather than self-conscious clarity or vision of structure. In this respect, Gadamer's perspective of *theoria* seems to play down the visual aspects and rather

[146] Experiences of interconnection and oneness are also important for Gadamer, although for him this is linguistically mediated and focuses on human community. We shall explore the connection between language and metaphysics in Chapter 7.

[147] See Chapter 3 above.

emphasize the participatory or what could be seen as the erotic aspects of traditional *theoria*, and Gadamer explains:

> Contemplatio does not dwell on a particular entity, but in a region. *Theoria* is not so much the individual momentary act as a way of comporting oneself, a position and condition. It is "being present" in the lovely double sense that means that the person is not only present but completely present. ["*Es ist 'Dabei-Sein' in dem schönen Doppelsinne, der nicht nur Answesenheit meint, sondern auch dies, daß der Anwesende 'ganz dabei' ist*"] Participants in a ritual or ceremony are present in this way when they are engrossed in their participation as such, and this always includes their participation equally with others or possible others. (Gadamer 1998, 31; cf. original text in Gadamer 1983a, 44)

Through this we can see that this leads to a more holistic experience beyond particular entities to a "region," a type of intense participation that leads to an experience of equality, and Gadamer suggests that what is experienced in *theoria* is something held in common and accessible to all; it is not diminished like other goods when they are shared, and in fact increases with participation. What we have in common and community are familiar themes that can be found in Gadamer's conception of the festival, which was discussed above in Chapter 5, as an experience that leads past our normal purposes and identifications towards a more holistic relation to one another. For Gadamer, in a festival separations between individuals are set aside in favor of a common respect and openness to all, where instead of falling into individual conversations and activities a sense of unity prevails. This points towards collective communal experiences which may lead to a greater sense of unity than may normally be experienced. For Gadamer, *theoria* seems to be a type of respectful participation that avoids objectification, pointing to more relational perspectives. This is linguistically mediated and not a "pure seeing," but nevertheless this is a profound experience that may lead to self-transformation which may change our relation to other people and the world more generally.

This perhaps can be somewhat clarified by very briefly looking at how Gadamer interprets Plato. Rather than focusing on a two-world Platonism of static Forms as real Being in contrast to a diminished physical and historical world, Gadamer's interpretation of Plato points towards the positive possibility of the role for becoming in the mixture of a good life in Plato's *Philebus*. He explains, "[o]nly when the mixture is no longer thought of as a

diminution and clouding of the pure, true, and unmixed, but as a genus of its own, can it be the place where we see how the being of the good and the true is constituted" (Gadamer 1986c, 113). For Gadamer, the conception of noetic ideas that seem to exist apart in themselves is a false abstraction from the mixture within life and universals participate in particulars (see Gadamer 1986c, 113). He later explains:

> Thus, in the intrinsic connection between the good and the beautiful, which is brought out so emphatically here, we can see an indication that "the good," which is at the same time "the beautiful," does not exist somewhere apart for itself and in itself, somewhere "beyond." Rather it exists in everything that we recognize as a beautiful mixture. What is viewed from the perspective of the *Republic* (or the *Symposium*) as the pure unmixed good or beautiful "beyond being" is here determined to be the structure of "the mixed" itself. In each case it would seem to be found only in what is concretely good and beautiful. And precisely the unity and integration of the appearance itself would thus appear to constitute its being good. This thesis, it seems to me, does not represent a change in Plato's teaching, a change that would have led him to abandon the doctrine of ideas or the transcendence of the good. It is still true that the good must be separated out of everything that appears good and seen in distinction from it. But it is in everything and is seen in distinction from everything only because it is in everything and shines forth from it. (1986c, 115-116)

For Gadamer, the good is something that shines forth within our daily lives rather being an experience of a second world, but it also transcends what it appears within. If we consider *theoria* for Gadamer, I would understand it not as a vision of metaphysical objects in a second world, but rather as a heightened experience of becoming as emergent possibility in the here and now.[148] As Gadamer remarks, as previously quoted in Chapter 3, "*[b]eing that can be understood is language*" (2004, 470) and *theoria* is a heightened experience that can transform our understanding of being, our language and ourselves. A heightened experience of *theoria* may lead to new experiences of being which may inform our self-understanding, a process of transformation. This provides a tangible and emergent approach to *theoria* which may be helpful in respect for considering how experiences of *theoria*

[148] In my view, there is some ambiguity here that relates to Gadamer's thought more generally. It would seem to me that Gadamer may not be dismissing the possibility of metaphysical structures running through reality, but rather is pointing to how whatever structures there may be dynamically emerge within the subject matter of language and tradition.

may be relevant for the practices of philosophy as a way of life in a contemporary context.

Gadamer associates *theoria* with reality and participation, relating Aristotle's conception of *energeia* to this as both activity and reality and what he calls the cultic. As he puts it:

> Whoever participates in a cultic act in this way lets the "divine" emerge, so that it is like a palpable bodily appearance. This applies very well to an artwork. Standing before its appearing we also say: "That's right!" [*So ist es!*]. What has come forth is something with which we agree, not because it is an exact copy of something but because as an image it has something like a superior reality. It may perhaps also be a copy of something, but it does not need to have anything about it that is like a copy. In thinking of it one thinks of what, for example, the mystery cults protected as a holy secret. (Gadamer 2007, 213)

Gadamer is indicating a relation to "divine" or holy experience that has some affinity with the experience at religious festivals in Greek times and connects this to the experience of an artwork. Here we see an example of the connection Gadamer draws between aesthetics and metaphysics, and the experience of an artwork is a form of *theoria*, a contemplative and participatory experience of truth. In his consideration of a copy, Gadamer is not discounting that it could reflect an existent reality, but rather he is emphasizing the possibility of creative emergence.[149]

For Gadamer, *theoria* is not something abstract, like a scientific theory or other such constructs. *Theoria* is something that takes us outside of ourselves and the conscious control of a subject and Gadamer explains that "[*t*]*heoria* is true participation, not something active but something passive (pathos), namely being totally involved in and carried away by what one sees," and later remarks that "[c]onsidered as a subjective accomplishment in

[149] In Gadamer's presentational account of the artwork he points to the productive value of a picture versus it being a mere copy of an original (see Gadamer 2004, 135). For Gadamer, what is pictured, in contrast to a copy, is rather an ontologically connected communion with the original and is an opportunity for increase and the presentation of what is, an event of being. As we saw in Chapter 5, this ontological and presentational account of artwork is crucial to his account of aesthetics more generally. If we consider what this presentational account may indicate in respect to Gadamer's conception of *theoria*, it would be a dynamic linguistic event of true insight which is creative and productive rather than merely repeating or copying what already exists, a coming into presence of being.

human conduct, being present has the character of being outside oneself" (2004, 122). As Gadamer continues, he relates this to the ecstatic experience of divine madness in Plato's *Phaedrus*:

> In the *Phaedrus* Plato already described the blunder of those who take the viewpoint of rational reasonableness and tend to misinterpret the ecstatic condition of being outside oneself, seeing it as a mere negation of being composed within oneself and hence as a kind of madness. In fact, being outside oneself is a positive possibility of being wholly with something else. This kind of being present is a self-forgetfulness, and to be a spectator consists in giving oneself in self-forgetfulness to what one is watching. (2004, 122)

Here we find another example of the importance of relational experience for Gadamer. Far from being "madness," an experience of self-transcendence may bring us out of our limited and normal habits and awareness towards more holistic experiences of reality.[150] Gadamer, drawing on the insights from Rilke, Hegel and Greek religion, writes that "we are always other and much more than we know ourselves to be, and what exceeds our knowledge is precisely our real being" (Gadamer 1986b, 78). From this, we can see the importance of Gadamer's conception that what is beyond our subjective consciousness is something 'more real,' which seems to point toward a more holistic and profound sense of self than we are normally aware that works to overcome subject/object dualism.

Experiences of transcendence and interconnection are important for Gadamer's thought and there is a vital connection between theory and practice. Gadamer views *theoria* as an experience of something held in common, and links the experience of *theoria* as an "overwhelming presence" that not only not diminished but

> actually gains through participation. In the end, this is the birth of the concept of reason: the more what is desirable is displayed for all in a way that is

[150] In his essay "The Over-Soul," Emerson points to how in experiences of religious revelation there is "[a] certain tendency to insanity" (1983, 392), which he associates with an influx of intense light. He later writes that the religious experiences with different religious denominations "are varying forms of that shudder and awe and delight with which the individual soul always mingles with the universal soul" and continues by noting that "[t]he nature of these revelation is the same; they are perceptions of the absolute law. They are solutions of the soul's own questions" (1983, 393). Here we can see the importance of expansive experience common to Gadamer and Emerson, and also of the stronger metaphysical leanings within Emerson's thought.

> convincing to all, the more those involved discover themselves in this common reality; and to that extent human beings possess freedom in the positive sense, they have their true identity in that common reality. (1983b, 77)

In the course of human communal living, norms are created and ideally people would live reasonably. Theoretical experience is ideally grounded into practice. Of course, this may not be easy, as there are collective illusions and distortions that may limit the realization of the ideal of living reasonably, but nevertheless, in Gadamer's view an authentic community of genuine solidarity is something we should work towards realizing. *Theoria* for Gadamer thus seems to both relate to a very down to earth sense of living according to reason as a form of social reason and experience of community and also is a type of intensified and relational insight that fosters the experience of a connection to a greater whole akin to aesthetic experience, such as found in his understanding of the festival.

For Gadamer, *theoria* and *praxis* are intertwined, and aesthetic experiences are for him more real than the everyday but are not separate from it and are rather intensifications of the everyday that may transform us. In this respect, both Plato and Aristotle indicate theory is superior to practice, but for Plato theory is related to practice while for Aristotle, judging from renowned and controversial passages in Book Ten of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, there seems to be a separation between theory and practice, where theoretical contemplation divorced from the everyday is the highest form of happiness. However, given the overall practical orientation of Aristotle, the relation between theory and practice is a matter of scholarly contention.[151] In this respect, Gadamer argues that for Aristotle there is a unity of theory and practice and Walter Brogan (2002) suggests that Aristotle's understanding of friendship supports Gadamer's view, where a self-sufficient contemplative attunement with oneself allows oneself to be present to the other and respectful of their differences in friendship, and true friendship and kinship is an experience of *theoria* in practice.

Nightingale notes that there may be challenges assimilating Plato's understanding of *theoria* to modern thought:

[151] This has been a matter of much scholarly debate. See Brogan (2002) and Nightingale (2009) for outlines and considerations of this debate.

> We may object to a philosophical theory based on a "metaphysics of presence" which does not acknowledge human subjectivity (i.e. that the human subject constructs what it perceives, apprehends, or knows). In addition, Plato's divinization of the Forms and his comparison of the activity of contemplation to a religious revelation will strike many modern readers as objectionable. Nonetheless, we must acknowledge that, for Plato, the activity of *theoria* takes as its model a cultural practice that was essentially religious, i.e. *theoria* at religious sanctuaries and festivals.[152] (2009, 112-113)

Gadamer was also well aware of concerns such as these, which perhaps contributes to why he tries to avoid associating *theoria* with objective presences, articulates a more modest variation of *theoria* related to human finitude via language, and draws upon conceptions such as the cultic and heightened experience more generally, but relates them with less exotic cultural forms. For example, Gadamer defends cultic experiences and associates them with experiences of the festive and the theatre in modern times. He writes that "all cultic ceremony is a kind of creation" and notes that "the original and still vital essence of festive celebration is creation and elevation into a transformed state of being" (1986b, 59). The strong relationality and creative emergence that runs through Gadamer's aesthetics finds cultural placeholders in festivals, the theatre, and artwork more generally. Nightingale explains that Plato drew upon the accepted cultural practice of *theoria* and through this "claimed legitimacy for theoretical philosophy and found a way to structure philosophic practice and make it more intelligible to the layperson" (2009, 93). Similarly, I would suggest that Gadamer finds legitimacy for heightened experiences of interconnection such as the cultic and *theoria* through drawing upon more accepted notions such as festivals, the theatre and works of art more generally. Gadamer remarks that "art belongs in the neighbourhood of *theoria*" (Gadamer 2007, 220), and as we saw in Chapter 5, Gadamer writes that "I believe that the arts, taken as a whole, quietly govern the metaphysical heritage of our Western tradition" (2007, 195). Such a transition or 'translation' is not without challenges, and although I have pointed to tensions in Gadamer's thought, these frictions and ambiguities in his approach are arguably quite productive, whereby through holding both to strong notions of truth *and*

[152] Nightingale notes that although Plato does draw upon secular notions of *theoria*, according to which a traveller goes out to see the world, his account of *theoria* is primarily informed by the "sacred visuality" at religious festivals and sanctuaries (2009, 113).

human finitude his conception of *theoria* both draws upon and reinvigorates transcendent aspects of Greek thought through their articulation in a contemporary context. This is perhaps not only a good example of Gadamer's contention that we participate in an ongoing and living tradition which we may draw upon for our benefit and contribute to, but specifically points to the value of our metaphysical philosophical tradition that Gadamer defends contra Heidegger.

I would suggest that the practice of *theoria* for Gadamer would consist in the attempt to open towards more relational experiences and perspectives. This is not just a theory of relationality, but rather a practice of experiencing the transformative effect of heightened interconnection. In Gadamer's aesthetics, the experience of beauty, order, and harmony are also important to his thought, and what I believe Gadamer is driving at is encouraging the emergence of perspectives and cultural forms that may encourage more harmonious experiences of community. Nightingale explains how the experience of beauty and seeing the Forms leads towards becoming more virtuous:

> By contemplating the Forms, the philosopher becomes both wise and happy. And this activity also enables him to "give birth to virtue." The vision of Beauty thus renders the philosopher virtuous as well as wise: theoretical contemplation leads to the production and enactment of virtue in the practical sphere. (2009, 84)

For Plato the contemplation of Forms moves us out of illusion and can give birth to virtue, and Gadamer seems to be pointing in the same general direction as this, albeit instead of *theoria* being a vision of a second world of Forms along the lines of the prevalent interpretation of Plato's Analogy of the Cave, for Gadamer *theoria* is a heightened and creative emergence of the becoming of being that occurs within language in the here and now and which may serve as a measure of sorts. I believe that the truth-value of this for Gadamer would rest on the engagement of the "subject matter" through our linguistic experience of the world as experienced through conversation, aesthetic notions such as the symbol, the festival, the cultic, and experiences of art and *theoria*. For Gadamer, as with his hermeneutics more generally, the experience of *theoria* is something that will never be complete and is always ongoing, but nevertheless seems to reorient us towards a holism that impacts our lives and potentially encourage a more ethical relation to others.

As we saw in Chapter 5 in respect to Gadamer's conception of the festival, we move past our purposefulness and have a different sense of time, there is a tarrying, and he writes, "the essence of our temporal experience of art is in learning how to tarry in this way. And perhaps it is the only way that is granted to us finite beings to relate to what we call eternity" (1986b, 45). This tarrying is the lived experience of *theoria*, an abandonment to the real and participation like in a festival, an experience which is related to the divine and the whole for a time. Like Plato's understanding of a *theoros*, for Gadamer theoretical insight is not something that is unrelated to normal reality, but rather is something to be applied back into the everyday. As Gadamer writes in respect to the relational experience that a work of art may have on us, such experience is "a shattering and a demolition of the familiar. It is not only the 'This art thou!' disclosed in a joyous and frightening shock; it also says to us; 'Thou must alter thy life!'" (2008, 104). Gadamer's transitioning *theoria* towards aesthetics and language may be a helpful approach for relating *theoria* to the practice of philosophy as a way of life in a contemporary context, as it provides an approach to transcendence (crucial for ancient thought and so important to Hadot) which is supported by theory and discourse that is relevant for contemporary concerns.

Plato's Analogy of the Cave and its Relation to Gadamer's Thought

Plato's Analogy of the Cave is the prototypical account of the state of illusion of humankind. Found in *The Republic*, in his cave analogy Plato describes the common human state as being prisoners, bound to seeing only falsehood represented by shadows rather than the truth itself. The cave inhabitants mutually reinforce their illusions and Plato describes how if someone were freed a strong disorientation would ensue and there would be a tendency to believe false prior conceptions. Plato suggests the passive nature of the person undergoing this transition; they do so rather involuntarily and need in fact be compelled in some way as their habitual tendencies tend to orient them to the cave (see 1997, 515d-e). However, with gradual re-orientation there is an adaptation of vision and learning to see the truth in the higher world above and outside the cave. With this newfound vision of the Good, our emancipated person would pity the prisoners below

and see the foolishness of what they value. Socrates gives the following account of this vision of truth:

> Whether it's true or not, only the god knows. But this is how I see it: In the knowable realm, the form of the good is the last thing to be seen, and it is reached only with difficulty. Once one has seen it, however, one must conclude that it is the cause of all that is correct and beautiful in anything, that it produces both light and its source in the visible realm, and that in the intelligible realm it controls and provides truth and understanding, so that anyone who is to act sensibly in private or public must see it. (517b-c)

This experience of contemplating the Good in contrast to the world of shadows in the cave creates the impetus for a strong re-orientation and Socrates points to the challenge of returning and readjusting to the darkness of the cave. For Plato, such divine knowledge pre-exists in *Nous*; what is required is to turn the soul around from the shadows towards the light and the Good. For Plato this is a matter of turning towards the truth, which is the realm of Being and in the world of Forms in contrast to the world of becoming. In the *Republic* this transition is a matter of release from the body and its sensual pleasures (for example, in other dialogues such as the *Phaedrus* and *Symposium* there is a more positive role for the body, as was noted above). For Plato, those that attain this vision should be directed not to stay there in contemplation, but to return to rule the city justly for the sake of its citizens (519c-e). Thus, there is a need to return to do what is best for the city, even if it goes against their self-interest, and Socrates says that this "won't be doing an injustice to those who've become philosophers in our city (520a).[153] Socrates speaks of what they would tell the future guardians, a part of which runs:[154]

> […] each of you in turn must go down to live in the common dwelling place of the others and grow accustomed to seeing in the dark. When you are used to it, you'll see vastly better than the people there. And because you've seen the

[153] Scholars – from Aristotle onwards – have found that returning to the cave is a problematic issue for Plato. See Silverman (2007) for considerations on whether the philosopher should descend and whether this is a hardship imposed upon them. Silverman also offers an account of various contemporary positions relating to these questions and maintains that the philosopher does not sacrifice their happiness by their descent.

[154] The guardians are a special class of citizens, specially trained philosophers who do not accumulate wealth and live apart of other citizens. They are also known as philosopher kings.

> truth about fine, just, and good things, you'll know each image for what it is and also that of which it is the image. (520c)

As the guardians become adjusted to the dark they will be able to relate to it and still see the truth. In a certain sense this could be seen within a model of 'translation,' where the guardians presumably must become somewhat fluent in both the perspectives of the intelligible world and the shadows of the cave yet prioritize the former.[155]

As discussed above, Nightingale maintains that the description Plato gives in respect to *theoria* is idealized and she emphasizes that *theoria* is a continual and ongoing effort. Nightingale maintains that despite the fact that the philosopher only may practice civic *theoria* in a good city (they risk harm if in a bad city),

> [n]onetheless, Plato makes it quite clear that the private (nonpolitical) theorist will translate his contemplative wisdom into the practical sphere: metaphysical contemplation provides the ground for virtuous action, which the philosopher performs when he "returns" (again and again) from contemplative activity. (2009, 92)

Gadamer also points to this practical aspect to Plato's thought: "Although he celebrated the theoretical ideal of life, Plato remained a citizen of his city. Even if he was a frustrated or failed politician, for him theory and politics remained indissolubly united" (Gadamer 1998, 19). This points to how Plato expected the insight of *theoria* to be applied to daily life and encourage transformation.

In respect to training the guardians of the city, Socrates explains that such development isn't a random affair: "This isn't, it seems, a matter of tossing a coin, but of turning a soul from a day that is a kind of night to a true day—the ascent to what is, which we say is true philosophy" (521c).

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[155] Gadamer describes the model of translation and its relation to understanding: "Expressions of meaning are first of all linguistic manifestations. As the art of conveying what is said in a foreign language to the understanding of another person, hermeneutics is not without reason named after Hermes, the interpreter of the divine message to mankind. If we recall the origin of the name hermeneutics, it becomes clear that we are dealing here with a language event, with a translation from one language to another, and therefore with the relation of two languages. But insofar as we can only translate from one language to another if we have understood the meaning of what is said and construct it anew in the medium of the other language, such a language event presupposes understanding" (2008, 98-99).

Subjects that may help bring this about include mathematics, geometry, astronomy and finally dialectic are considered in Book VII of the *Republic*. This is intended to contribute to turning the soul away from becoming to true Being. As Hadot remarks, "[f]or the Platonists […] even mathematics is used to train the soul to raise itself from the sensible to the intelligible" (1995, 64). Approaching mathematics in the right way, i.e. for knowledge rather than for calculation and trade, can lead to insight beyond the senses.[156] When discussing using the sky to experience the spiritual structures beneath it, Socrates expresses concerns with this: "But we should consider their motions to fall far short of the true ones […]. And these, of course, must be grasped by reason and thought, not by sight" (529c-d). Given this, he sees that the sky is like a model not to be taken too seriously and suggests instead "let's study astronomy by means of problems, as we do geometry, and leave the things in the sky alone" (530b-c). This seems not to be so much because the physicality of the sky can't be used in this way (and this is looked at far more positively, for example, in the *Timaeus*, where viewing the cosmos can lead us back into harmony, in the *Phaedo* where the experience of physical objects can aid in the recollection of the Forms, and in the *Symposium* with the ladder of love begins from the experience of a beautiful body), but rather that there is a danger in this in being too caught in the physical sights, so a more abstract way is suggested. The point to be drawn here is that, again, there is a transition away from materiality and becoming towards the stability of Being; becoming within this model is a hindrance and needs to be surpassed. Now, these subjects are only preludes to the dialectic:

> It is intelligible, but it is imitated by the power of sight. We said that sight tries at last to look at the animals themselves, the stars themselves, and, in the end, at the sun itself. In the same way, whenever someone tries through argument and apart from all sense perceptions to find the being itself of each thing and doesn't give up until he grasps the good itself with understanding itself, he reaches the end of the intelligible, just as the other reached the end of the visible. (532a-b)

As we have seen from Chapter 5, this movement beyond sight, images or contingent is something that occurs in both Gadamer's and Emerson's

[156] In respect to how mathematics is important for Plato, see Burnyeat (2000).

thought.[157] For Plato, dialectic is the path to experience Being and the previous subjects are merely preparatory. However, he isn't particularly detailed about what exactly dialectic is, although it moves beyond mere hypotheses and leads to profound insight: "[W]hen the eye of the soul is really buried in a sort of barbaric bog, dialectic gently pulls it out and leads it upwards, using the crafts we described to help it and cooperate with it in turning the soul around" (533d). Important to the process of dialectic is to give an account of something:

> Then, do you call someone who is able to give an account of the being of each thing dialectical? But, insofar as he's unable to give an account of something, either to himself or to another, do you deny that he has any understanding of it?
>
> How could I do anything else? (534b)

As we have seen in Chapter 2, Gadamer also emphasizes the importance of giving an account, which we can find most explicitly in his early work on Plato (see Gadamer, 1991), and his emphasis in *Truth and Method* of following the subject matter in dialogue can be seen in the same light. For Plato, the need to give an account also applies to the Good:

> Unless someone can distinguish in an account the form of the good from everything else, can survive all refutation, as if in a battle, striving to judge things not in accordance with opinion but in accordance with being, and can come through all this with his account still intact, you'll say that he doesn't know the good itself or any other good. (534b-c)

Through dialectic an account of Being rather than opinion and becoming can be given. Socrates later says when discussing the education of children that this relates to the subjects that "bring together to form a unified vision of their kinship both with one another and with the nature of that which is" (537b-c) and goes on to suggest that "the greatest test" to see who have natural abilities for dialectic and those who don't is being able to achieve a unified vision (538c). What I would take this to mean is that a crucial aspect

[157] For Gadamer, this perhaps is best exemplified by his conception of the "inner ear" (as discussed in Chapter 5), by means of which one surpasses the contingent to the more 'permanent' that is renewed within language and tradition. For Emerson, this ideality lies in a higher Mind and Over-soul.

of dialectic is the experiences of unity.[158] For Plato, theoretical experience is to be put to practical use by the guardians of the city:

> [O]nce they've seen the good itself, they must each in turn put the city, its citizens, and themselves in order, using it as their model.[159] Each of them will spend most of this time with philosophy, but, when his turn comes, he must labor in politics and rule for the city's sake, not as if he were doing something fine, but rather something that has to be done. Then, having educated others like himself, to take his place as guardians of the city, he will depart for the Isles of the Blessed and dwell there. (540a-b)

Here taking on a leadership role is conceived of as a necessary burden to be engaged in. The process of educating and training for this role is met with approval as it seemingly will lead to beautiful (*kalon*) guardians (540c).

From the experience of *theoria*, beautiful leaders emerge who in turn help create a more ordered and beautiful city. Thus, *theoria* is not an abstract conception or one that results only in other-worldly contemplation but is applied to personal and collective transformation within a lived life (with the possibility of 'retirement' towards a more continual focus on *theoria* disengaged from the city's affairs).[160] Nightingale points to the tension within Plato's explanation of *theoria*, as the philosopher is both disembedded from the social and economic systems yet helps the society by utilizing his contemplative wisdom in word and action. Nightingale writes that "[w]hile his contemplative activities pull him away (for a time) from human affairs, Plato's philosopher acts virtuously when he engages in social and practical activities". Nightingale goes on to remark that "[t]his is, no doubt, one of the reasons why Plato preferred oral or 'living' discourse to the disembodied voice of the written text: for Plato, philosophical wisdom must be enacted by a living soul in a living body" (2009, 92). It is this lived sense of dialogue and the interweaving of theory and practice that Gadamer points towards and strongly emphasizes in his interpretation of Plato. Nevertheless, Plato in the *Republic* is pointing to how experiences of unchanging Being can help orient

[158] As we saw in Chapter 5, this transition towards relationality and unity is pervasive in Gadamer's and Emerson's thought and Neo-Platonic conceptions.

[159] In Gadamer's interpretation of Plato's Good he is emphasizing how it is beyond Being rather than a model which would seem to imply a metaphysical structure.

[160] For Aristotle, although it may be debated the relation between theory and practice, *theoria* is an activity of divine contemplation, not an abstract experience like objective scientific thought.

people towards a more harmonious, ordered, beautiful and good existence that may help lead people out of the illusions of the cave of ordinary human life.

As we have discussed above with respect to Gadamer's interpretation of Plato and his own hermeneutics and aesthetics, he focuses on productive emergence. Whatever substances there might be, they enter tradition and language and become subject matter. They thus move from substances in a traditional sense (e.g. Forms) towards matters of substance or meaning within language. Here Gadamer is influenced by Hegel, whose thought implies that through a dialectical movement in time there is a productive development of truth. However, rather that his being a teleological movement of the Idea rolling through history, Gadamer is prompted by his own reading of Plato and its importance of the lived experience of human dialogue within language to soften Hegel's perspectives within his own thought. What this amounts to is that rather than seeking preformed universal substance (Plato) or an Idea that teleologically evolves towards the Absolute (Hegel) as a basis for truth, whatever truth there is productively emerges within human language and tradition.[161]Although it is possible to experience truth, this will never be complete and is an ongoing process and whatever universals there are (which for Gadamer is found within language and tradition) do not completely impose and override the particulars but rather inform and in a sense co-create universals along with the particulars (and in fact particulars provide the opportunity for universals to present themselves). Thus, there is a reciprocal relation between part and whole, rather than how Plato is traditionally interpreted, where a theoretical vision of a Form results in a true universal as Being that overrides a deluded particular as non-being. As such, Gadamer's hermeneutics seems to point to more mobile and evolving universals and provides a multifaceted discourse that may be more amenable to the 'lived logic' of transcendence in a contemporary context.

Emerson's Angle of Vision and *Theoria*

Emerson's approach towards intuitive or poetic insight is often couched in the language of vision. Shannon Mariotti notes that "[i]n a fundamental way,

[161] See Scheibler (2000, ix-xii) for a consideration of how Greek cosmological conceptions intertwine with Hegelian viewpoints and Platonic conceptions of dialogue in Gadamer's thought.

he reminds us of the deep connections between thinking and seeing: the term 'theory' derives from the Greek *theoria*, which means to look at, view, or see something but also to contemplate and think about it" (2014, 305). For Emerson, seeing can be an experience of dynamic participation where we transcend our ordinary experiences of self and abandon ourselves to the object of contemplation. In this respect, transition, movement, and abandonment are crucial motifs for Emerson's thought; as he writes in his essay "Works and Days":

> Everything in the universe goes by indirection. There are no straight lines. I remember well the foreign scholar who made a week of my youth happy by his visit. "The savages in the islands," he said, "delight to play with the surf, coming in on the top of the rollers, then swimming out again, and repeat the delicious manoeuver for hours. Well, human life is made up of such transits. There can be no greatness without abandonment. (*CW7*, 91-92)

For Emerson, we must be open to movement and abandonment from our habitual perspectives and Greenham explains that for Emerson "[s]ight is not a sense which only breeds thoughts and ideas, as Hobbes and Locke have it; sight disappears in the seeing, in the active participation in the circulation of Universal Being. The senses, so configured, connect us to God" (2012, 125). Sight leads to participation and abandonment, and he encourages the expansion of one's vision. In Emerson's view, we should open ourselves to a broader "angle of vision"; as he puts it in his 1871 lecture series "Natural History of the Intellect":

> Tis a lesson we daily learn in conversing with men that it is not so important what the topic or interest is about which we deal as is the angle of vision under which the object is seen:—that means, that it be seen in wide relations, seen with what belongs to it near and far, and the larger the mind the more truth. One man astonishes by the grandeur of his scope, another confines by the narrowness of his. (2008, 108)

We may relate this expansion of vision back to our aesthetic practices of Chapter 5, where we draw upon a variety of approaches to open up the possibility for more relational viewpoints. Whether we are looking at transitions, movement, abandonment or expansions of vision, these are reorientations from our habitual ways of thinking.

Vivian Hopkins points to Emerson's emphasis on sight and explains how his own lack of an ear for music lead him to adopt the term "musical

eyes." She also points to Neoplatonic viewpoints as one of the influences on Emerson's prioritizing sight. She explains that "sight is of all senses the least material; as Plotinus says of the souls on the upper regions, 'There everybody is pure, and each inhabitant is as it were an *eye*'" (1965, 26, citing Plotinus 1817, 365).[162] Hopkins explains that for Emerson the perceptual leads to a poetic vision that moves past the material and towards the eternal and Mariotti notes that "[t]hroughout his essays and lectures, Emerson dramatizes transitions from the material realm of particulars to the ideal realm of universals in terms of vision" (2014, 306). In sum, Emerson's drawing upon sight as a form of participatory and expansive experience finds a strong connection with the Greek understanding of *theoria,* and we shall now turn to considering practices that may be found in his thought.

Hadot points to what he calls the "view from above" as an important aspect of ancient thought. This is a disinterested viewpoint from which the philosopher or sage may experience a universal perspective that brings ordinary viewpoints into question. He associates this with theoretical and practical physics (a lived experience of physics as an experiential process of transformation) and exercises with moral and experiential components. Although he characterizes this in a variety of different ways with examples from different schools of ancient thought, the view from above is an experience of transcendence and expansion of self towards universality. One theme that Hadot points to in ancient thought is that of the "flight of the soul," i.e. the separation of the soul from the body towards an experience of celestial heights. This entails a movement from the individual self with its passions towards an experience of universality. Hadot points to an exercise in which "the imagination speeds through the infinite vastnesses of the universe," and the goal of this experience of lived physics was a "greatness of soul" (1995, 242-243). Hadot explains that "[t]he exercise of practical physics is already hinted at in Plato's *Timaeus,* where the soul is urged to bring its inner movements into accord with the movements and harmony of the all" (1995, 243). Hadot brings together numerous viewpoints from various schools which makes it difficult to relay the details of his account,

[162] However, it can also be argued that given that our eye is part of our bodily nature, vision is a deeply embodied experience. For example, see Johnson (1987) who points to the importance of bodily experience structuring our experience of the world, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty's essay "Eye and Mind" where he points to the participatory bodily aspects of perception and vision (Merleau-Ponty, 1993).

but a description he provides when discussing the Stoic Marcus Aurelius may help provide the reader with a basic orientation: "The view from above […] leads us to consider the whole of human reality, in all its social, geographical, and emotional aspects, as an anonymous, swarming mass, and it teaches us to relocate human existence within the immeasurable dimensions of the cosmos" (1995, 245). With this cursory explanation, strong parallels are apparent with Emerson's antipathy to custom and prioritizing experiences of nature and Mind.

As we have discussed in previous chapters, for Emerson the approach towards more participatory experience starts from the everyday. In *Nature* Emerson looks to the common and nature as a productive starting point for such experience:

> To go into solitude, a man needs to retire as much from his chamber as from society. I am not solitary whilst I read and write, though nobody is with me. But if a man would be alone, let him look to the stars. The rays that come from those heavenly worlds, will separate between him and what he touches. (1983, 9)

When we look to the stars we come back to a sense of solitude and presence to ourselves, and experience that distances us from our customary and material ways of relating to ourselves. In her consideration of *theoria* in respect to Plato's *Timaeus*, Nightingale notes that

> the divine part of the human soul is akin to cosmic *nous* – it is made of the same material and has the same structure and motion. It can therefore "follow together with" the motion of the heavens and "rectify" its own vagaries (which are deviations from its natural motion). By theorizing the heavens, then, the human being can recover his "original nature". (2004, 176, quotes from Timaeus 90c-d)

Such a viewpoint is a very Emersonian sentiment, or, put another way is a commonality that reflects how Emerson is a modern Platonist. Nature (and the spiritual within it) can serve as a 'measure' to help gauge our departure from ourselves and bring us back into harmony with ourselves. For Emerson, we start from a common experience in our daily life such as the experience of nature, and, in order to experience nature profoundly, we must radically alter our perspective or "axis of vision":

> The problem of restoring to the world original and eternal beauty, is solved by the redemption of the soul. The ruin or the blank, that we see when we look at nature, is in our own eye. The axis of vision is not coincident with the axis of things, and so they appear not transparent but opake. The reason why the world lacks unity, and lies broken and in heaps, is, because man is disunited with himself. (1983, 47)

When we are not united with the soul or Over-soul we experience a fragmented and distorted world; if we are open to the soul, we will experience a more harmonious world. As we saw in Chapter 4, for Emerson like is known by like, and if we carry high and noble thoughts, we will experience high and noble things. In Emerson's view, in order to experience heightened insights, we need to move past our discursive understanding as it may lock us into habitual and limiting modes of thought. We can conceive such intuitive insight as a form of *theoria*, a vision of what is, which is fostered when we are united with ourselves and what we are.

Emerson's famous transparent eyeball passage in *Nature* relates an experience that suddenly comes forth during an ordinary walk: "Crossing a bare common, in snow puddles, at twilight, under a clouded sky, without having in my thoughts any occurrence of special good fortune, I have enjoyed a perfect exhilaration" (1983, 10). The potential for this "exhilaration" is not somewhere far away and inaccessible but is just slightly outside our normal experience; however, too often this possibility may be lost and overlooked through ordinary modes of living. It is something extraordinary that suddenly comes out of the experience of the ordinary:

> Standing on the bare ground,—my head bathed by the blithe air, and uplifted into infinite space,—all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eyeball; I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or particle of God. The name of the nearest friend sounds then foreign and accidental: to be brothers, to be acquaintances,—master or servant, is then a trifle and a disturbance. (1983, 10)

This is strong experience of unity and there is a transfer from regular experience to intense relationality. We may note the commonality with distancing from ordinary perspectives that we find with Hadot's "view from above," and a radical experience of unity and the infinite. From this heightened and intensified experience of unity there is a return to more particularity of a subject, but Emerson points to a reciprocal relation to nature that seems to loosen subject/object dualism: "The greatest delight

which the fields and woods minister, is a suggestion of an occult relation between man and the vegetable. I am not alone and unacknowledged. They nod to me, and I to them" (1983, 11).

In Emerson's view, it is not only an experience of the stars or cosmos that may foster profound experience; all nature that can provide this impetus: "The stars awaken a certain reverence, because though always present, they are inaccessible; but all natural objects make a kindred impression" (1983, 9). Elsewhere in "The Method of Nature" Emerson remarks that "I draw from nature the lesson of an intimate divinity" (1983, 130). According to Hopkins, "[f]or Emerson, the specific forms of nature do actually contain spirit; and the poet will attain his intuition not by penetrating them to reach an essence on the other side, but by actually living in these forms" (1965, 32). Although I agree with this, there is a strong ideality to Emerson's thought that lends it to surpassing matter, which leads to both tension and inconsistency in his thought. As Stuart Brown puts it: "The sum of Emerson's inconsistency from the beginning, therefore, is this: that sometimes the world seemed to him to have independent material existence, colored and interpreted by mind, and sometimes it seems to him wholly dependent and ideal. He never could entirely make up his mind" (1945, 336).[163] Nevertheless, Emerson is not emphasizing an otherworldly form of transcendence unrelated to our daily lives. For example, Russell Goodman remarks that "[l]ike Wordsworth and Coleridge, Emerson was not so much interested in departing from the natural world for some 'other' transcendent realm, as in departing from our normal apprehension of and life in that world: in redeeming the world and our experience of it" (1997, 527). In this respect, the way that I would characterize this tension is that although Emerson valued nature, it is the way that nature fosters experiences of ideality and is a resource for self-realization that is most valuable to him. A profound experience of nature leads us through to this ideality and such

[163] Brown attributes this to the influence of Platonism on Emerson's thought. Sherman Paul, when considering Brown's position contends that he "overlooks Emerson's activism and the contribution of German idealism to the transformation of the essentially static Platonic epistemology" (1969, footnote 7, 239). See Van Leer (1986) for a consideration of the sources and tensions in Emerson's idealism. When we consider the influence of Plato on Gadamer and the importance of Hegel's thought in respect to becoming for Gadamer, we see a convergence of influence here and how both Emerson and Gadamer are influenced by German idealism towards mobilizing Platonic conceptions and making them more dynamic.

insight may be creatively manifested back within experience in the here and now to transform matter to better reflect these ideals. Given these tensions in Emerson's account, he has been interpreted in more grounded and more idealist directions.[164]

An important theme in ancient philosophy was to become like God. As Plato writes in the *Republic*, "the gods never neglect anyone who eagerly wishes to become just and who makes himself as much like a god as a human can by adopting a virtuous way of life" (613a).[165] One approach to this was that philosophers could theorize the heavens as the visible manifestation of Divine order to improve themselves. As Plato writes in the *Timaeus*:

> [T]he god invented sight and gave it to us so that we might observe the orbits of intelligence in the universe and apply them to the revolutions of our own understanding. For there is a kinship between them, even though our revolutions are disturbed, whereas the universal orbits are undisturbed. So once we have to know them and to share in the ability to make correct calculations according to nature, we should stabilize the straying revolutions within ourselves by imitating the completely unstraying revolutions of the god. (47b-c)

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[164] For example, see Van Cromphout (1990) who argues for an "anti-idealist" account of Emerson's relation to nature.

[165] In the *Theaetetus*, Plato writes "a man should make all haste to escape from earth to heaven; and escape means becoming as like God as possible; and a man becomes like God when he becomes just and pious, with understanding" (176a-b). See Svavarsson (2015) in respect to the importance of becoming Godlike in ancient thought Greek thought. Svavarsson points to the importance of happiness for the Greeks and its association with becoming Godlike and writes that for Plato and Aristotle, "god is, above all, intellect" (29). For the Greeks, becoming Godlike involved attunement to the divine or rational part of ourselves by which we attune to the Divine. Svavarsson traces the importance of receiving gifts from the Gods in early ancient Greek thought and emulating the Gods and how later ancient Greek moral philosophers emphasized minimizing human dependence on the Gods and focused on emulation. This was a shift from reliance on the Gods to a human affinity with the Gods. Emerson seems to take an additional step of not only emulating the Godlike, but also co-creating with the Godlike of which we are a part. Hopkins (1951) considers the influence of Ralph Cudworth work's *The True Intellectual System* on Emerson. She points to how Cudworth "emphasizes nature's subserviency to God," whereas for Emerson nature "shows subordination to man" (1951, 85). She writes that "in the Emersonian universe man holds a higher position than in the Neoplatonic, since nature is shown as the servant, not of divine art, but divinely-inspired man" (1951, 86).

Likewise, for Emerson we are to look to nature to connect us to a higher Mind, which can help re-orient us towards a greater harmony with such a Mind. In this process we grow back into 'our own' power, which is in harmony with universal order and aims, is moral, and 'our own' is expanded towards universality. For Emerson, morality isn't listening to common rules (e.g. civic virtues) but rather following one's own experiences of the principles of reality (e.g. Godlike virtues); as he writes in "Circles":[166] "There is no virtue which is final; all are initial. The virtues of society are vices of the saint" (1983, 411). In order to experience the Divine, we must become like it, as "no man touches these divine natures [Ideas], without becoming, in some degree, himself divine" (1983, 37). As we saw in Chapter 4, Hadot writes in respect to Plotinus that "Plotinus adopts the old saying, 'like is known only by like'," and explains that: "he believes we can seize the reality we wish to know only by becoming spiritually similar to it" (2004, 163). Hadot adds, "Plotinus' philosophy thus reveals the spirit of Platonism—that is, the indissoluble unity of knowledge and virtue" (2004, 163). For Emerson, virtue and knowledge and becoming godlike relate to the practical power to change our world. In this respect, the experience of a theoretical vision potentially has very practical consequences in terms of individual and collective change.

Malachuk explores the "transcendental equality" that can be found in Emerson's thought. He explains that "Emerson's transcendentalism—his belief that we all have the Over-soul within us—is fundamentally political: our individual godliness, once recognized, will make us more public and human in our regards and actions, because we will know that all other people are godly too" (2014, 277). Malachuk explains that it was based on a transcendental vision of equality that Emerson could challenge the premises of slavery, and that his writings from 1844-1863 "all elaborate upon this basic insight: not human laws but justice (that is, treating all men as transcendentally equal […]) necessitates an end to slavery" (2014, 277). For Emerson, revelatory insight provides the impetus and power to challenge rigidified social norms and existing power relations. In this respect,

[166] See Plotinus Ennead I.2 for the difference between civic and godlike virtues, a distinction Plotinus associates with Plato's thought (see I.2.3). The civic virtues relate to principles of order applicable to our bodily life on earth and attain some likeness or trace of the highest Good, whereas the godlike virtues related to a likeness to God and involve purifications to attain.

Emerson's conception has an important democratic emphasis that may make it amenable to contemporary application.[167] Malachuk notes that although Emerson certainly had concerns that all people would realize this, "Emerson never wavered in his conviction that transcendental equality is real" (2014, 280). In Emerson's view, we need to work at recognizing this which may be seen as an endeavor towards theoretic experience, a philosophical practice which has political implications beyond the individual. As Malachuk explains: "First we must recognize the godly faculty within us, and then in all human beings; and then we proceed to build just states" (2014, 278).

Mariotti considers Emerson's idealism and the importance of vision and notes that how he focusses his eye or mind's eye tends to both reflect what he values and also wants to look past. Drawing on a term of Emerson's, she calls this gaze "focal distancing". She notes Emerson's debt to Kant's transcendentalism and its influence on him and remarks that "Emerson's gaze travels in a tran-scending motion, moving up and out, over and above" (2014, 305). She raises concerns about this and maintains that Emerson "is never able to effectively integrate the material world into his vision or into his thinking, to see a horizon that fully takes particularities into account in addition to universals" (2014, 307). Mariotti charts how with the issue of slavery in nineteenth century America, Emerson began to "recognize the costs of his idealism, to realize he has trained himself *too well* to look past the particular things that he now finds himself staring at, focusing on more directly and lingeringly, that he now finds compelling and sometimes even inspiring" (2014, 307). Mariotti notes the transition from focal distancing to "gaze directly on the disruptive, disagreeable particular in ways that now have a greater value for Emerson" (2014, 326), and also the tendency to revert to focal distancing.[168] Mariotti concludes that Emerson was never able

[167] Rather than the strong division between guardians and the rest of the city's populace as per Plato's account in the *Republic*, for Emerson we are all potential 'guardians'.

[168] However, it could be argued that the difference in Emerson's viewpoint had more to do with a decision to speak out against slavery rather than not acknowledging particulars. For example, in an early work, "The American Scholar," Emerson points to the value in the common: "I embrace the common, I explore and sit at the feet of the familiar, the low. Give me insight into to-day" (1983, 68-69). In Emerson's view, the spiritual may be found within particulars: "The meal in the firkin; the milk in the pan; the ballad in the street; the news of the boat; the glance of the eye; the form and the gait of the body;—show me the ultimate reason of these matters; show me the sublime presence of the highest spiritual cause lurking,

to integrate a full appreciation for particularity into his perspective. Nevertheless, she maintains that "[i]f we could draw out the lessons of Emerson's own tensions with idealism, and look not just at what he *says* but what he *does*," that "Emerson can teach us about the importance of focusing our eyes in a way that takes in the material world without losing sight of ideals, a way of seeing that can also draw inspiration and illumination from what is particular, material, and immediate" (2014, 334). In Mariotti's view, it is through Emerson's emphasis on action that Emerson may inspire an appreciation for both the material and ideal.

The process of *theoria* can be seen as encouraging a broader angle of vision towards the whole and a re-focusing back to a point for the application of such insight within the particularity of the everyday. Emerson writes in his essay "Nominalist and Realist" that "[w]e are amphibious creatures, weaponed for two elements, having two sets of faculties, the particular and the catholic" (1983, 577). As we have seen, for Emerson heightened experiences lead towards universality, but he also points to the role of particularity and newness within life as it is lived, and the importance of the individual and the particular in relation to the whole. There is a strong tension between the individual and universal in Emerson's thought that has been noted before and is relevant to our discussion here. For Emerson, individual experience is an entry point for the universal; for example, within his conception of Genius at times it seems unique and at others he emphasizes universality; we each have a unique path to the experience of Intellect, but it is a universal experience. This tension is somewhat resolved by seeing this is a particular individual dynamically participating in the universal. As cited in Chapter 2, William James captures the tension between part and whole in Emerson's thought and points towards a possible resolution:

> Through the individual fact there ever shone for him the effulgence of the Universal Reason. The great Cosmic Intellect terminates and houses itself in mortal men and passing hours. Each of us is an angle of its eternal vision, and the only way to be true to our Maker is to be loyal to ourselves. (1962, 20)

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as always it does lurk, in these suburbs and extremities of nature" (1983, 70); note these lines have been cited in Chapter 1, but an additional passage has now been added.

It is through this loyalty to our own vision that we can be true to the whole.

Emerson attempts to manifest the insight of ecstatic experience practically within everyday life. The cyclical and potentially spiralling motion of *theoria* relates to this, a cycle of expansive awareness (a widening of the angle of vision) and then a return, which I would see as a focusing and tightening of the such an angle. In this respect, Emerson in the chapter "Power" from the later work *The Conduct of Life* points to the importance of focus and concentration to marshal one's forces and he gives the example of how a gardener prunes a tree which "forces the sap of the tree into one or two vigorous limbs, instead of suffering it to spindle into a sheaf of twigs" (1983, 981). He also points to the value of repetition to encourage a desired state of affairs. For example, he mentions the value of practice: "All great speakers were bad speakers at first" (1983, 984). In Emerson's chapter "Eloquence," in *Society and Solitude* (1870) and lecture "Eloquence," in *Letters and Social Aims* (1875), he points to numerous aspects to develop the capacity to speak eloquently, such as the receptivity to heightened insight (in places this just seems to spontaneously flow, and in others involves modulation), learning certain techniques and speaking in the language of common people, and standing strong within the facts and what one believes (*CW7*, 30-51; *CW8*, 59-71). This points to both the need for ecstatic experience and drill and practice to help bring about the self-transformation that may lead to greater eloquence, and I think this approach applies more generally to Emerson's understanding of self-realization. There are both ideal and more material and tangible physical aspects to this process.

For Emerson, it is important to cultivate moral insight and apply it through moral action. We may conceive of moral insight as a process of *theoria*, which involves both a process of vision and also having the will to apply such insights towards reforming ourselves. Robinson explains that "moral choice is […] threatened less by the failure of the will or the limits of fate than by the distraction of true perception. Can the essential be perceived in the rush of the trivial?" (2008, 154). In this respect, *theoria* is the experience of looking past what is close at hand and customary and Emerson's emphasis in his later thought is on how to act within the world of particulars without losing sight of a higher vision to provide the impetus for

practical reform.[169] If, as Mariotti maintains, Emerson has a tendency to look past material particulars, I am suggesting that a modulation of the angle of vision may be cultivated to both encourage both expansion beyond the close at hand and to look through material particulars and a subsequent re-focusing, modulating between universal and particular in a process of growth that may not lose track of material particularity.

As we discussed in respect to Gadamer's interpretation of Plato, he adds a dynamic element of movement to his hermeneutics and here Emerson's emphasis on creative expression, as we saw in Chapter 4, moves in a similar direction in comparison to Platonic thought. In this respect, two passages previously quoted from "Poetry and Imagination" in Chapter 4 related to the experience of the poet seem to convey a striking resemblance to a participatory form of *theoria*: "he is ascending from an interest in visible things to an interest in that which they signify, and from the part of a spectator to the part of a maker" (*CW8*, 22), which suggests a creative element, as does when he writes:

> Now at this rare elevation above his usual sphere, he has come into new circulations, the marrow of the world is in his bones, the opulence of forms begins to pour into this intellect, and he is permitted to dip his brush into the old paint-pot with which birds, flowers, the human cheek, the living rock, the broad landscape, the ocean, and the eternal sky were painted. (*CW8*, 21)

However, we have also seen how the eternal and permanent are important aspects of Emerson's thought which relates him closer to traditional notions of *theoria*. A closer consideration of the affinity to and

[169] Gadamer writes that "[a] person who has no horizon does not see far enough and hence over-values what is nearest to him. On the other hand, 'to have a horizon' means not being limited to what is nearby but being able to see beyond it. A person who has a horizon knows the relative significance of everything within this horizon, whether it is near or far, great or small" (2004, 301). We need to both be able to see past an excessive focus on the close at hand, without losing track of it and to put it within a proper perspective. When Hadot writes, "in considering a partial aspect of the world, contemplation discovers the totality of the world, going beyond the landscape glimpsed at a given moment, and transcending it on the way to a representation of totality which surpasses every visible object" (1995, 261), this is a type of expansive vision that again points towards the experience of a greater whole. As we have pointed to in Chapter 5, Emerson's conception of evolving circles provides a framework for expansive abandonment into greater totalities which are circumscribed by successive circles.

differences with ancient conceptions of thought in this respect and what this may mean for the experience of universality in a contemporary context in relation to Hadot's thought will be reserved for Chapter 8.

Emerson: *Theoria* in Practice

Emerson would broadly agree with Plato's assessment that we live in a cave of illusion with false values. Emerson's transcendentalism is about transcending our individual and collective habitual "cave," towards a vision of what the everyday *could be* if we realized our ideals. When we encounter the ordinary, it has the potential to become extraordinary through the shift of the "angle of vision" from our habitual viewpoints towards more intensified and ideal perspectives. This is by no means easy and may only be in glimpses and needs to be expressed and realized back into our daily lives in a variety of potential ways.

For Emerson, nature brings us in touch with the spiritual aspect of reality and ourselves. A very basic practice would be to engage with nature in some way. Whether this would entail going for walks in nature or just relating to something close at hand like a houseplant or garden plant, I would suggest that Emerson's perspectives point towards a simple practice of contemplating (theorizing) a natural object with a sense of attention and depth that is led by the experience of the object itself. If we consider a practice with a natural object, a flower could be a good one (although any natural object could be used), as it could be particularly uplifting given Emerson's association of flowers with the delicate affections (presumably love) in *Nature*. Elsewhere, in his 1844 essay "Gifts," Emerson suggests that flowers are good gifts as "they are a proud assertion that a ray of beauty outvalues all the utilities of the world. These gay natures contrast with the somewhat stern countenance of ordinary nature: they are like music heard out of a work-house" (1983, 535). In this respect, in Emerson's view flowers would seem to point to possibilities beyond utilitarian viewpoints, a transition that seems to be important both in respect to encouraging experiences involving *theoria* and aesthetic perspectives. We may also be inspired by an account of the experience of flowers by John Muir, nature lover and proponent for the protection of nature, who was influenced by transcendentalism and had a strong appreciation for flowers:

> Like everybody else I was always fond of flowers, attracted by their external beauty and purity. Now my eyes were opened to their inner beauty, all alike revealing glorious traces of the thoughts of God, and leading on and on into the infinite cosmos. (2000, 110)

Given this description, contemplating flowers could be considered as a practice that has the potential to invite an experience of the cosmic perspectives of interconnection in ancient philosophy that Hadot points to (see Hadot, 1995). However, the point isn't that we may experience such profundities all the time or any such thing, but rather that a flower is something beautiful that we can contemplate and then see where that leads.[170] This potential exercise will be developed further in Chapter 7.

Theoria is a movement of journeying away from the familiar to the unfamiliar and incorporates a return that transforms what was previously familiar. This is a movement of transitions. Let us consider the following passage from Emerson's "The Poet":

> The poet alone knows astronomy, chemistry, vegetation, and animation, for he does not stop at these facts, but employs them as signs. He knows why the plain, or meadow of space, was strown with these flowers we call suns, and moons, and stars; why the great deep is adorned with animals, with men, and gods; for, in every word he speaks he rides on them as the horses of thought. (1983, 456)

Here in this 'quasi-poetic' passage, plains and flowers, animals and men and gods, things we either find close to us in our environment or found within cultural religious discourse (god), are blended with suns, moons, stars, the cosmos. There is a "meadow of space," a type of plain now surrounded by familiar flowers, indicating a transition that makes the common uncommon and uncommon common. This points to how the poetic may inform the experience of *theoria*; the creativity of poetic language may help either bring old connections into question or create new ones that support profound experiences beyond the commonplace within everyday experience. In a certain sense, we might say that Emerson is bringing the type of experience that in ancient philosophy was found in the order of the cosmos down towards more tangible experience, be it poetic, through the experience of nature, or otherwise. For Emerson, an important part of this experience

[170] Of note, for Gadamer (following Plato), the beautiful leads to the good (see Gadamer, 2004).

consists in creating the type of life that reflects the kind of ideals we perceive during moments of heightened insight. This takes on very tangible forms within Emerson's thought, such as following one's interests and engaging in a fulfilling vocation. In "Success," Emerson makes an important distinction between what he calls the external life, which relates to what we learn in school and how to make oneself useful in the world with its emphasis being to "unfold […] talents, shine, conquer and possess," and an internal life:

> […] the inner life sits at home, and does not learn to do things, nor value these feats at all. 'Tis a quiet, wise perception. [...] We have grown to manhood and womanhood; we have powers, connection, children, reputations, professions: this makes no account of them all. It lives in the great present; it makes the present great. This tranquil, well-founded, wide-seeing so is no express-rider, no attorney, no magistrate: it lies in the sun and broods on the world. A person of this temper once said to a man of much activity, "I will pardon you that you do so much, and you me that I do nothing." And Euripides says that "Zeus hates busybodies and those who do too much". (*CW7*, 158)

Here Emerson is pointing to a perception and experience akin to the leisure of *theoria* to help bring this external way of relating into question. In this respect, although Emerson clearly prioritizes the inner in respect to orientation,[171] he is also well aware of the need for outer skills and talents in order to manifest one's vision. This is why there is such an emphasis on finding's one's calling as this is a crucial part of lived life in human society. However, moments of leisure in which we may see past our regular viewpoints are something that can reorient our lives. In the essay "Spiritual Laws," Emerson points to taking a different perspective towards routine work:

> Let a man believe in God, and not in names and places and persons. Let the great soul incarnated in some woman's form, poor and sad and single, in some Dolly or Joan, go out to service, and sweep chambers and scour floors, and its

[171] Emerson writes: "But it is sanity to know, that, over my talent or knack, and a million times better than any talent, is the central intelligence which subordinates and uses all talents; and it is only as a door into this, that any talent or knowledge it gives is of value. He only who comes into this central intelligence, in which no egotism or exaggeration can be, comes into self-possession" (1983, 16). As we have shall see in the passages cited from Emerson's works in this section, the unique and individual are also important for Emerson; as mentioned previously there is a strong tension between the particular and universal in Emerson's thought.

> effulgent daybeams cannot be muffled or hid, but to sweep and scour will instantly appear supreme and beautiful actions, the top and radiance of human life, and all people will get mops and brooms; until, lo! suddenly the great soul has enshrined itself in some other form, and done some other deed, and that is now the flower and head of all living nature. (1983, 323)

Emerson's point here is not to encourage or justify menial labor, but to attend to whatever labor one is doing wholeheartedly, which I would suggest can be seen as a practice.[172] This can be seen as focusing appreciating on whatever one is doing and doing it well. However, Emerson is also concerned with what may be; in this sense, in the long run there is a need for vocations that fulfill us. For Emerson, it is not just any work that suffices, but it is work that resonates with our interests and our very being. He explains in the essay "Intellect" that "[e]ach man has his own vocation. The talent is the call" (1983, 310) and that "every man has the call of the power to do somewhat unique, and no man has any other call" (1983, 310). Thus, every person has his or her own ability and invitation towards something unique and he explains in "Success" that "[s]elf-trust is the first secret of success, the belief that, if you are here, the authorities of the universe put you here, and for cause, or with some task strictly appointed you in your constitution, and so long as you work at that you are well and successful" (*CW7*, 148).[173] For Emerson, the consideration of finding the right work to suit one and actualizing it is an important aspect of self-realization. Our vocation should be fulfilling to us and doesn't need to appeal to outer standards: "Is there no loving of knowledge, and of art, and of our design, for

[172] For example, when Thoreau describes hoeing his bean field in *Walden*; see Thoreau (2004).

[173] David Robinson considers the above passage and voices a response to potential contemporary concerns: "The modern reader will, no doubt, be inclined to ponder the phrase 'authorities of the universe' and suspect in the passage a message of political docility. But Emerson's larger argument is that acceptance of a certain role or task, a form of work, is an essential grounding for individual dignity. Without some measure of self-acceptance, which is fundamental to any sense of self-validation, any insulation against the pressures of social conformity is impossible. The point has its obvious limits – work under oppressive conditions can be degrading or stupefying, and Emerson's call for acceptance must be correspondingly adjusted in the light of prevailing social arrangements. But his emphasis on work, an inescapably social activity, as the grounding for self-culture is a significant adjustment to his individualist perspective" (2008, 163).

itself alone? Cannot we please ourselves with performing our work, or gaining truth and power, without being praised for it?" (*CW7*, 149). There is a value of work: "The sum of wisdom is, that the time is never lost that is devoted to work" (*CW7*, 149). There is also a value to leisure in the sense of a more contemplative perspectives, and in a sense, I think it would be quite right to say that meaningful work is a form of embodied and productive leisure, shattering such dichotomies. For Emerson, when it comes down to it, we must learn self-trust and find what is of value to ourselves and follow that path will prove to be joyful: "[E]very one can do his best thing easiest. Your own act is always cheerful to you: anybody else's in your hands is a bore to you. We talk of schools, but God makes one man of each kind. That makes the eternal interest of persons to each other" (2008, 110). When each person is truly following their own interest and calling (which is paradoxically when they tap into universality), they will have the best to offer each other. In Emerson's view, when we follow something of true interest to ourselves it can lead us onward towards truth and wisdom and a joyful life. This vision of success also entails a criticism of the excessive focus on the materialism and limited conceptions of success in the America of his time, which, sadly enough, still finds contemporary relevance both in respect to American and, more generally, Western cultural values.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored conceptions of *theoria* in ancient thought, primarily in Plato, considered Gadamer's interpretation of *theoria* and how *theoria* relates to Emerson's thought. For both Gadamer and Emerson, *theoria* is something that relates to practice and occurs in the process of living, a type of expanded vision or experience that relates to more universal perspectives, which are then dynamically instantiated within our concrete life. The process of journeying, experience, and return is an ongoing process of transformation. These aspects of *theoria* were shown to be related to Gadamer's consideration of aesthetic experience and a variety of practices and approaches have been pointed to in Emerson's thought and brought out, from the experience of nature, poetic viewpoints, appreciating work and developing a career, to modulating our angle of vision to both consider both wider viewpoints and the close at hand. This provides us with a variety of tangible approaches that incorporate the contemplative experience of *theoria*

within the everyday. We considered how Gadamer's and Emerson's viewpoints are both are inspired by ancient conceptions of *theoria*, and also how they place an increased emphasis on immanence and dynamic and creative emergence in the here and now. Further, we suggested that this transition may be a helpful way of envisioning *theoria* in respect to its present-day application as a practice and part of philosophy as a way of life. When considered in relation to the aesthetic viewpoints developed in Chapter 5, we behold a multi-faceted approach to encourage experiences of transcendence and viewpoints beyond those habitually held.

Chapter 7 – Nature: Gadamer and Emerson

As we have pointed out previously, Hadot emphasizes the importance of a lived experience of logic, ethics, and physics and that these were connected in ancient thought. In this chapter, we will consider the role of nature in Gadamer's and Emerson's thought and how this relates to the practice of self-transformation. How logic and thought relate to nature or physics is considered. Gadamer strongly emphasizes the role of human tradition and language (logic) and places relatively little emphasis on nature (physics), whereas nature plays a prominent role in Emerson's thought. We will look at places where Gadamer does in fact point to a connection to nature and consider how Emerson's thought may be drawn upon to help expand Gadamer's hermeneutics to further consider nature and make the connection between logic and physics. The limitations of Gadamer's and Emerson's thought in respect to nature will also be considered and thinkers such as Goethe and John Muir will be drawn upon to underline the possibility of developing more eco-centric perspectives. The role of nature in respect to a contemporary application of philosophy as a way of life is examined and specific practices are suggested by drawing upon Hadot, Emerson, Gadamer and other thinkers.

Gadamer's Hermeneutics and Nature

Given the strong emphasis on language and tradition, there is a tendency in Gadamer's thought to neglect the direct perception and experience of nature. Nevertheless, Gadamer indicates the comprehensive scope of his hermeneutics, which includes the "experience of beauty in nature and art" and he explains that "tradition encompasses institutions and life-forms as well as texts" (2008, 96). Here we see an indication of the broad range that tradition covers for Gadamer. As we have mentioned previously, Gadamer famously writes that "*[b]eing that can be understood is language*" (2004, 470) which does not mean that being is limited to language, but that meaning emerges through language, and Gadamer notes that "we speak not only of a language of art but also of a language of nature—in short, of any language

that things have" (2004, 470). Gadamer himself seems to indicate that nature is a rich source of meaning: "It is not by accident that one could talk about the 'book of nature,' which contained just as much truth as the 'book of books.' That which can be understood is language. This means that it is of such a nature that of itself it offers itself to be understood" (2004, 470). For Gadamer, language is the universal medium for humans, and here Gadamer is pointing to meaning that may be found through our experience of nature.

Still, nature is not a strong focus in Gadamer's thought and Mick Smith (2001) maintains that nature is often culture's antonym for Gadamer. He criticizes Gadamer for not considering the impact of nature on forms of life and writes that "[f]or Gadamer, this context is entirely cultural, he largely ignores the contribution made by nature in producing the backgrounds against and within which language games and meanings emerge" (2001, 69). It is noteworthy that although Smith criticizes Gadamer for a lack of focus on nature, he feels that if the anthropocentrism assumptions could be cut away from Gadamer's thought, his hermeneutics could be helpful for listening to nature. In Smith's view, with what he calls Gadamer's expressionism there is no reason why meaning should be limited to impressions made by humans and not include nature (2001, 69). Smith points to the danger in making conversation and language solely human as that may entail that we neglect to hear nature's voice.

Although Gadamer certainly does not emphasize nature, there are certain ways in which he does consider nature to some extent, as we shall see. In this respect, it is important to consider how the influence of nature could be further reflected in his hermeneutics and how this may relate to practice. One path towards this is to consider aspects of Gadamer's thought that suggest a stronger interconnection between humans and nature and try to play out how nature would be experienced within the process of self-understanding. For Gadamer, language is the universal medium in respect to understanding and he states that "[e]very interpretation of the intelligible that helps others to understanding has the character of language. To that extent, the entire experience of the world is linguistically mediated, and the broadest concept of tradition is thus defined – one that includes what is not itself linguistic, but capable of linguistic interpretation" (2008, 99). Here we witness the universal role that language plays in the process of self-understanding and this applies whether or not language is literally spoken in conversation. As such, such communication would presumably apply to

nature as well. A challenge here is that in *Truth and Method*, Gadamer explicitly points to how language is something attributable exclusively to humans**.** According to Gadamer, "[l]anguage is not just one of man's possessions in the world; rather, on it depends the fact that man has a *world* at all. The world as world exists for man as for no other creature that is in the world" (2004, 440). Furthermore, Gadamer separates humans from nature in respect to freedom which he ties to language.[174] If we consider two human agents who are communicating, we may understand how they are unified through speaking together in a common language which transcends them as individuals. Likewise, someone interpreting a literary text or artwork is encompassed and transcended by the tradition and language which unite text or artwork and interpreter. However, when it comes to nature, given the unique role that language plays for Gadamer and since nature seems to either be devoid of language or to have a language that is radically different from human language, there seems to be little possibility for a type of shared sense of language between humans and nature, which makes it difficult to conceive how communication with nature may occur. Put another way, there may be a barrier between humans and nature in terms of translatability. In respect to language more generally, Gadamer is quite aware that although language is a medium there are ways that it may act more as a bridge and ways that it may act as a barrier when he questions:

> What is […] linguisticality? Is it a bridge or a barrier? Is it a bridge built of things that are the same for each self over which one communicates with the other over the flowing stream of otherness? Or is it a barrier that limits our self-abandonment and that cuts us off from the possibility of ever completely expressing ourselves and communicating with others? (1989b, 27)

I would suggest that the way Gadamer distances language from nature may unfortunately serve more as a barrier than need be. In this respect, it is worth noting that Ulster and co-authors, in their introduction to the book *Interpreting Nature: The Emerging Field of Environmental Hermeneutics* consider the applicability of hermeneutics to experiences of nature. They note the importance of the dialogical structure of mediation between subjects for hermeneutics, and given this, they ask whether this may pose an issue in

[174] Gadamer writes, "unlike all other living creatures, man's relationship to the world is characterized by *freedom from environment*. This freedom implies the linguistic constitution of the world" (2004, 441).

respect to applying hermeneutics to nature, as, "[a]fter all, since we can't have verbal communications with natural entities that do not possess language, isn't the possibility of a (hermeneutic) relationship ruled out?" Their answer is the following: "Our wager is that it is not, because the stance of hermeneutics remains one of mediation" (2013, 8). I too would hope for this possibility of relating hermeneutics to nature. Let us turn now to look at aspects of Gadamer's thought that point beyond the bifurcation of culture and nature and possible routes towards mediation.

There are certainly indications in Gadamer's thought that point to the interconnection with nature. Ancient philosophical perspectives of harmony and order inspire Gadamer; for example, in the essay "Art and Imitation" he draws upon Pythagorean perspectives of imitation and cosmic order. There he explains that Pythagorean conception of imitation "implies all three manifestations of order: the order of the cosmos, the order of music, and the order of soul." (1986b, 102). Thus, there seems to be an affinity between the orders that runs through the cosmos, music, and soul, and thereby Gadamer seems to suggest that similar structures exist between ourselves and nature. Now, Gadamer is inspired by this metaphysical conception from ancient philosophy and relates it to art:

> Every work of art still resembles a thing as it once was insofar as its existence illuminates and testifies to order as a whole. Perhaps this order is not one that we can harmonize with our own conceptions of order, but that which once united the familiar things of a familiar world. Nevertheless, there is in every work of art an ever new and powerful testimony to a spiritual energy that generates order. (1986b, 103)

Although this explanation distances Gadamer's view from the metaphysical conceptions he draws upon, Gadamer nevertheless still retains an important emphasis on order and harmony and conceives this as a form of mimesis (which is creative for Gadamer rather than merely copying a pre-existing order). For Gadamer, within the artwork something emerges that testifies to order and must be ever renewed. However, this may invite the following viewpoint: if the Pythagoreans found order in the cosmos as a part of nature and this runs through the soul and music, and, if art relates to truth, and all art has something harmonious about it, in order to make this all tie together, doesn't that imply that nature or reality is in some way orderly and harmonious like the Pythagoreans claimed? And, if there is an orderliness

running through reality that art creatively reflects and develops, couldn't we also look to nature to experience this?

Andrew Fuyarchuk (2017) points to the importance of Pythagorean mathematical conceptions for Gadamer's interpretation of Plato and maintains that for Gadamer these are phenomenological and ontological rather than metaphysical. He argues that in contrast to Heideggerian conceptions of such numbers being related to static eternals in contrast with a natural world of non-being, "for Gadamer they move and are emblematic of the dynamics of a living organism—all things unfold the kernel of their essence over the course of time" (2017, 108). In Fuyarchuk's account, "[t]he order of the cosmos is somehow within the event of language, that is, the Beautiful mathematical proportions" (2017, 109). Such a reading of Gadamer's hermeneutics is quite helpful towards conceiving how nature and humans interact.

As we explored in Chapter 6, Gadamer understands the good as something we can look towards to provide an orientation within daily life and his reading of the *Philebus* (see Gadamer 1986c, 1991) plays a crucial role in developing his viewpoint. In the essay "Idea and Reality in Plato's *Timaeus*" Gadamer writes that "[i]n a sense, […] the mythical portrayal in the *Timaeus* is meant to be a deeper founding than that which the Socratic reflection about right living in the *Philebus* can provide," and also associates the role of the good with reality even in the *Philebus*: "Of course it is evident in the *Philebus* too that the Good and the order of reality as a whole are the real concern" (1980b, 192). Now, keeping in mind the crucial role that tradition plays for Gadamer, the following passage is striking:

> [i]t should be emphasized that the ordering of reality as that is explicated in the *Timaeu*s comes before any and all human possibilities of action, of any ordering of some thing or ordering of one's own life. This is the express point of the whole narrative. The constitution of the world is meant as the foundation for the possible constituting of human life and human society or, stated more accurately, for the possible realization of an ideal human constitution of the soul and of the state. One hears again and again in the narrative of the *Timaeus* that human beings should learn to order the motions of their own soul while regarding the order of the cosmos. To be sure, what is said in the *Timaeus* to hold for the action of the gods holds no less for the action of men. (1980b, 192-193)

Here we can see a clear example of how physics can inform ethics and logic and orient the human community. That is not a surprising viewpoint to find in respect to Plato's thought; however, to whatever extent that we may think this perspective extends to Gadamer's own hermeneutics, it is noteworthy because of the importance that Gadamer places on human tradition. This conception of the good may not only provide a way of relating to nature but also seems to support the view that nature may affect our self-understanding and could help serve as a corrective to individual and collective human distortions and indeed to tradition itself.

More generally, we find some support for the idea that for Gadamer nature may serve as a type of corrective for human distortions when he writes: "Under the guidance of modern art, it would be extremely difficult to recognize natural beauty in a landscape with any success. In fact, today we must experience natural beauty almost as a correction against the claims of perception educated by art" (1986b, 31). This implies an interconnection to nature from which we may learn something. Although Gadamer qualifies his assertion with the word "almost," he seems to be intimating that nature can in some way bring us back to truth. Going back to Pythagorean conceptions that inspire Gadamer, a harmonious order running through nature could presumably be a potential measure to help overcome collectively held societal distortions in favor of more harmonious forms of solidarity and community. By attuning to such an order, engaging it creatively by making an artwork that extends it in some way, or even being loosely inspired by it to create a radically innovative artwork may be a way of orienting the community. Gadamer writes that "[t]he coming into language that occurs in a poem is like entering into relationships of order that support and guarantee the 'truth' of what is said" (2004, 483). Although his point with respect the poetic word is that it stands in itself, presumably if the poet is inspired by an order she finds in nature, some of the truth poetry carries could relate to nature itself as it enters language.

Gadamer also points to the Greek conception of *physis* as a process of dynamic emergence within nature and relates this to the emergence of an artwork. Gadamer indicates that *physis* relates to a dynamic and fluid process: "What we call 'nature' and what the Greeks called *physis* is above all things what is alive though its being in motion" (2007, 219). According to Heidegger, *physis* is a "prevailing that prevails through man himself, a prevailing that he does not have power over, but which precisely prevails

through and around him" (1995, 26). Heidegger goes on to stress that "physis as beings as a whole is not meant in the modern, late sense of nature, as the conceptual counterpart to history for instance. Rather it is intended more originally than both of these concepts, in an originary meaning which, prior to nature and history, encompasses both, and even in a certain way includes divine beings" (1995, 26). This points toward a fundamental unity prior to the bifurcation of human culture in contrast to nature. *Physis* is a process of welling up and emergence that we do not have power over but emerges through us and nature. Gadamer points to the affinity between nature and art which, according to him, "stand closer to each other than the planned construction of products that come out of the workplace," and notes that "our language speaks of 'organic unity' in reference to both nature and art" (2007, 219). Given this affinity between art and nature, and since art is such a rich source of truth for Gadamer, this would seem to suggest that nature may be a source of truth. Furthermore, based on this we might suspect that language as it emerges within human culture actually could have more affinity with nature than Gadamer often indicates. For exam[i]t should be emphasized that the ordering of reality as that is explicated in the *Timaeu*s comes before any but there is no reason not to understand this emanation as flowing through nature as well (and, as we shall see, Emerson does just that).

In fact, there are instances in Gadamer's thought where he does indicate a much stronger interconnection with nature, such as with his notion of play:

> The fact that the mode of being of play is so close to the mobile form of nature permits us to draw an important methodological conclusion. It is obviously not correct to say that animals *too* play, nor is it correct to say that, metaphorically speaking, water and light play *as well*. Rather, on the contrary, we say that *man* too plays. His playing too is a natural process. The meaning of this play too, precisely because—and insofar as—he is a part of nature, is a pure self-presentation. (2004, 105)

In the play of life, it is not that nature plays like humans, but rather play is something in common between people and nature. Gadamer also points to how nature may inspire art: "Inasmuch as nature is without purpose and intention, just as it is without exertion, it is a constantly self-renewing play, and can therefore appear as a model for art" (2004, 105). Here he is again pointing to nature as an example for art to follow and, as such, nature could also be a model for human life more generally. For example, when we

consider that an experience beyond regular purposefulness is an important aspect of Gadamer's conception of the festival and that aesthetic experience relates to and transforms our everyday lives, it raises the question as to whether the direct experience of nature may not do so as well. Furthermore, when Gadamer describes *Bildung*, he explains that rather than being akin to technological production, it "grows out of an inner process of formation and cultivation," and he then goes on to say that "the word *Bildung* resembles the Greek *physis*. Like nature, *Bildung* has no goals outside itself" (2004, 10). Here again we have a connection between humans and nature, where the self-formative process of self-cultivation is akin to the emergence within nature.

So, as we have seen, Gadamer does in fact incorporate some aspects of a relation to nature in his thought, e.g. through considerations of the way in which order and harmony seem to connect nature and art, the good, through conception of play, and through the commonality between the emergence of art and nature in relation to the Greek conception of *physis*, and, lastly, through the way he relates *Bildung* to this.

So, how may we conceive the way that an experience of nature may enter our understanding via linguistic experience? One avenue toward experiencing nature hermeneutically is treating nature like a text. David Vessey (2014) considers how Gadamer's hermeneutics may be applicable to the experience of nature and relates this to the experience of reading. He looks at historical conceptions of the Book of Nature which entailed that nature was read symbolically as a text to understand God's will and maintains that Gadamer's conception of reading, given its performative nature, does not have to point beyond itself to the intention of God, but rather stands in itself. As Vessey indicates, reading is a creative process and performance that does not point back to authorial intent, but rather "[t]he performative aspect of reading always brings meaning to language anew" (2014, 90).[175] Gadamer's understanding of interpretation as presentation, which, as we have discussed previously is a viewpoint that runs through his hermeneutics more generally, means that the meaning stands within its presentations and performance.

[175] Vessey notes that words are disclosive for Gadamer, which again points to not needing a Divine author.

Vessey also points to a connection between perception and reading in Gadamer's thought and notes that it is "difficult to see how perceptual understanding is like reading unless we first grasp how reading is like perception" (2014, 91). Given how all understanding is interpretative for Gadamer and mediated through language, Vessey points to how language is involved in both reading and perception and that "linguisticality leads us to perceive things as being capable of being made intelligible through language" (2014, 91). He maintains that "for Gadamer, language belongs more than anything else to the faculty of perception: 'through reading something visual is awakened'" (2014, 92, citing Gadamer, 1990, 89).[176] Gadamer himself writes that "[s]eeing means articulating" (2004, 79). I believe this emphasis on perception that Vessey points to is an important way of orienting Gadamer's perspectives towards incorporating experiences of nature, and we will turn to Emerson below to give examples of how the perceptual experience of nature — or 'reading' nature, if you will, may relate to self-understanding.

As we have seen in Chapter 1, the hermeneutics of facticity or life as it is lived is important to Gadamer's thought. Theodore George points to the role of life in Gadamer's thought[177] and to the importance within this perspective of the correlation between humans and "to those beings among which they find themselves" (2012, 19). He points out that the "question of life as correlation […] has remained in the forefront of hermeneutic thought" and that the notion of life that Gadamer developed in *Truth and Method* "may perhaps be understood best not as a final word on the matter but rather as an opening within hermeneutic thought that Gadamer broaches but does not exhaust or even adequately explore" (2012, 19). George specifically considers the correlation of "our living relations with things," (2012, 19) and draws upon Heidegger and Gunter Figal to consider this correlation. George points to both the importance of a Heideggerian comportment of letting be

[176] In contrast, Fuyarchuk (2017) emphasizes the auditory nature of Gadamer's hermeneutics and maintains that visual emphasis is problematic. He maintains that Heidegger had a visual bias that finds commonality with scientific approaches seeking truth and that Gadamer's auditory emphasis serves as a corrective to this and supports relatedness.

[177] Also see Frazier (2009) who points to the importance of life and vitality for Gadamer's thought and the influence of Schelling and Bergson on him. Hadot maintains that modern conceptions of philosophy of Life (and points to Goethe and Bergson) found their inspiration in Neo-Platonic thought (1998, 40-41).

and to Figal's notion of exteriority which emphasizes an interaction with the thing itself. On George's account, in our lived relation with things implies an alternation and relation between these two approaches. He points to the back-and-forth movement found in Gadamer's account of play as reminding him of alternation and notes how play relates to animal life and nature and non-purposefulness for Gadamer.

George makes another connection as this back-and-forth movement reminds him of what Goethe calls a "great law" on which life and the joy of life rely and involves change in everything and guides nature and the human world. George is not alone in noting affinities between Gadamer and Goethe; for example, Henri Bortoft (2012) points to strong similarities between Gadamer's and Goethe thought. With this connection between Gadamer and Goethe, given the significant influence of Goethe's conceptions of nature and more generally on Emerson, this also indicates a proximity between Gadamer and Emerson and offers an entry point for further considering the relation of nature to Gadamer's hermeneutics, which will be considered further below. What I think George's paper points to is the possibility of an understanding of Gadamer that relates to the vital experience of life and nature, particularly when Gadamer's conceptions are further developed and related to other thinkers who place more emphasis on nature.

In summary, although there is not a strong focus on nature in Gadamer's thought, still, as we have seen there are places where he alludes to an interconnection with nature. Given this, I suggest that although Gadamer does not explicitly bring out humankind's relation to nature in detail, his perspectives contain a strong holism that seems to imply this possibility, and as such his hermeneutics may be relatively easily developed further in this direction.

The Transition from Metaphysics to Language

In order to understand how human understanding is mediated through nature, there needs to be a way to account for the connection between a human subject and a natural object. Gadamer, in his essay "The Nature of Things and the Language of Things" explains that whereas the conception of a Divine Mind overcame subject/object dualism in classical metaphysics, in his own hermeneutics this is achieved through language. Gadamer notes the "superiority of classical metaphysics" in respect to overcoming the dualism

of subject and object, which it achieved "by conceiving their preexisting correspondence to each other" (2008, 74). Gadamer explains that this is a conception that relies on a notion of truth that is "the conformity of knowledge to the object – [which] rests on a theological correspondence" and that "[a]n enigma that is insoluble for the finite mind is thus resolved in the infinite mind of the Creator" (Gadamer 2008, 74-75). That is, the subject-object dualism between human subjects and the world outside of us is reconciled in a more unified higher mind. However, Gadamer maintains that we cannot go back to this conception or secularized versions of it such as speculative idealism, but "for its part, philosophy may also not close its eyes to the truth of this correspondence". Gadamer later asks, "are there finite possibilities of doing justice to this correspondence?" His answer is in the affirmative, and he points to the correspondence at stake as being "the way of language" (2008, 75). In this respect, Gadamer wants language to provide the type of holistic interconnection described by classical metaphysics that leads beyond subject/object dualism, but in a way that is suitable for finite beings in a contemporary context. He states that "[o]ur finite experience of the correspondence between words and things […] indicates something like what metaphysics once taught as the original harmony of all things created, especially as the commensurateness of the created soul to things" (2008, 81). For Gadamer this harmony is experienced in language. In this sense, language takes on the role played by God and a Divine Mind in earlier thought.

For a succinct formulation of the transition from God to language in contemporary thought, we will turn to Jürgen Habermas. He writes: "Under the premises of postmetaphysical thinking […] the power beyond us – on which we subjects capable of speech and action depend in our concern not to fail to lead worthwhile lives – cannot be identified with 'God in Time'". He adds:

> The linguistic turn permits a deflationary interpretation of the "wholly Other." As historical and social beings we find ourselves always already in a linguistically structured lifeworld. In the forms of communication through which we reach an understanding with one another about something in the world and about ourselves, we encounter a transcending power. Language is not a kind of private property. No one possesses exclusive rights over the common medium of the communicative practices we must intersubjectively share. No single participant can control the structure, or even the course, of

> processes of reaching understanding and self-understanding. […] The *logos* of language embodies the power of the intersubjective, which precedes and grounds the subjectivity of speakers. (2003, 10-11)

Here we see how language seems to take on the role of God in respect to providing a common medium which transcends our subjectivity. Gadamer's turn to language implies strong parallels with this God-like role for language. For Gadamer, as we have seen, language and tradition both promote experiences of transcendence and universality. This affinity between language and God may help us understand that the way Gadamer uses language relates to Emerson's conceptions such as the Over-soul, Intellect and Mind, as well as to the way he uses the term God. In this respect, both Emerson and Gadamer place a strong emphasis on receptivity in their accounts of unifying experience, and whether this is explained in terms of language, God, or the Over-soul, it is some type of medial experience of truth that 'speaks through us'. Emerson often articulates intensified experience in terms of God and the divine. For example, in the essay "The Over-Soul," Emerson remarks: "We distinguish the announcements of the soul, its manifestations of its own nature, by the term *Revelation*" and he explains that "this communication is an influx of the Divine mind into our mind. It is an ebb of the individual rivulet before the flowing surges of the sea of life" (1983, 392). Given our discussion of the relation between God and language, it may be interesting to consider how the passage reads by 'translating' it to reflect the transition from God and metaphysics to language and aesthetics. For example, if we replace the word 'soul' with 'aesthetics,' '*Revelation*' with 'poetic word' and 'Divine mind' with 'language,' then this would read something like 'aesthetic inspiration is the influx of the poetic word, like the ebb of our self-understanding within the flowing life of our language and historical tradition'. Emerson's thought also exhibits some elements of the transition from metaphysics towards such deflationary readings, particularly through the way he blurs the line between humans and God, pointing to the "infinitude of the private man". In a sense, he provides a type of 'half way' position in which such a Divine Mind transitions towards a human Mind, rather than a stronger deflationary reading that emphasizes language and human finitude. In this respect, particularly if we consider that our current time may be 'post-secular,' Emerson's radicalization of such a Mind by relating it to human possibility and emphasizing spiritual

perspectives via direct personal experience in lieu of organized religion or abstract metaphysics may find important contemporary relevance.

Gadamer seems to believe that classical conceptions of a Divine Mind work in terms of overcoming subject/object dualism, but he nevertheless thinks that they do not sufficiently reflect human finitude, and, given that he doesn't think that modern variants such as Hegel's speculative idealism will suffice, presumably from his viewpoint neither would Emerson's understanding of Mind. Gadamer points to the correspondence between subject and object that may be conceived linguistically through his conception of rhythm. According to Gadamer, when poets

> describe the poetic conception as the harmony of the world and soul in the linguistic concretization that becomes poetry, it is a rhythmic experience they are describing. The structure of the poem, which thus becomes language, guarantees the process of soul and world addressing each other as something finite. It is here that the being of language shows its central position. (2008, 79)

Here Gadamer is suggesting that the poetic word overcomes the dualism between a human subject and the world, a process in which rhythm plays an important role as a resonance between subject and object that brings about an experience of emergent unity within language. Gadamer points to how conceiving rhythm as either a product of a subjective mind or outer object is inadequate, and when elsewhere he considers the experience of series of sounds at standard intervals, he remarks that "[i]t is as true to say that we project the rhythm into the series as it is to say that we perceive it there," and concludes that "we can only hear the rhythm that is immanent within a given form if we ourselves introduce the rhythm into it" (1986b, 45). Rhythmic experience is not something we stand back from but participate in and co-constitute and are actively involved in. In this respect, Gadamer's understanding of play as the back-and-forth movement that leads past the consciousness of isolated subjects as they are taken up within the play of a game may be seen as a variant of this, now conceived in relation to the rhythmic experience of language.

Although in this chapter I have been focusing on the importance of Mind for Emerson, he also provides poetic resources within his thought to overcome subject/object dualism, such as metaphor, symbol, etc., as discussed in Chapter 5 and, as previously mentioned, he has been interpreted

in linguistic directions. Like Gadamer, Emerson points to rhythmical elements of poetic expression. In a consideration of rhyme in his essay "Poetry and Imagination," Emerson explains that "rhyme soars and refines with the growth of the mind" (*CW8,* 26) and points to how people may like a drum beat or a tune and how "[l]ater they like to transfer that rhyme to life, and to detect a melody as prompt and perfect in their daily affairs. Omen and coincidence show the rhythmical structure of man" (*CW8,* 68). Here rhythmic experience brings about practical transformation and is based upon a sympathy running through reality. Emerson extends the experiences of these rhymes to nature and explains that "[b]y and by when they [people] apprehend real rhymes, namely, the correspondence of parts in nature—acids and alkali, body and mind, man and maid, character and history, action and reaction,—they do not longer value rattles and ding-dongs, or barbaric word jingle" (*CW8,* 26). That is, experiencing these real rhythms, rhymes and correspondences is emancipatory from the foibles of false custom and he also points to correspondences between the earthly and spiritual. For both Emerson and Gadamer, a poet through her linguistic expression may bring out the richer relationality and harmony between ourselves and the world that is normally unsaid or invisible. As we have discussed above in respect to Emerson, nature can bring us back to a more holistic experience of a higher Mind, but here we may re-conceive this via the experience of poetic rhythm through the experience of language. For Emerson more generally, both approaches of Mind and the poetic are important vehicles for holistic experience: "I count the genius of Swedenborg and Wordsworth as the agents of a reform in philosophy, the bringing poetry back to Nature,—to the marrying of nature and mind, undoing the old divorce in which poetry had been famished and false, and nature had been suspected and pagan" (*CW8,* 37-38). In my view, walking this line between Mind and language may be quite helpful as it points towards how a common phenomenon of experiences of unity and correspondence may be articulated in different ways; said another way, they may be seen as two sides of the same coin, one seen through the perspective of mind that emphasizes unity, the other through the more particular experience of poetry.[178]

[178] Emerson explains in his chapter on Plato in *Representative Men* that "[t]hought seeks to know unity in unity; poetry to show it by variety; that is, always by an object or symbol," and goes on to say that "Plato keeps the two vases, one of æther and one of pigment, at his

Gadamer points to a problematic breach between humans and nature and maintains that "this human state of having-been-forced-out of the living creation bounded by nature, implies a continual task of return and self-communion" (1992, 90), a sentiment that Emerson would have most surely agreed with. For Gadamer, when we acknowledge what we have been allotted, which is a measure, we may experience a greater whole through poetic language:

> Poetic reading […] is learning how to submit to the measure [*Maß*] which gives freedom. It is the 'Christ dancing.' The natural and thorough rhythmization, which the reading of a poetic creation demands and transmits, articulates, and orders not only the recitation but also the breathing of the speaker. One acquires an experience of the whole and of ourselves in the whole. (1992, 91)

What Gadamer is articulating is a relational experience that moves from a fragment or part (ourselves) to that of the whole, which he relates to a "Resting-in oneself" (1992, 91).[179] This would seem to have affinities with Emerson's notion of 'self-reliance,' which starts from individual experience and reconnects with a greater whole. Gadamer relates this experience of rhythm in the poetic verse to Hegel's good infinity.[180] Rhythm here would seem to indicate an interconnection to the whole, which should include nature. Although this process is an ongoing task when we consider Gadamer's hermeneutic position more generally,[181] what Gadamer seems to

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side, and invariably uses both" (1983, 642). In this respect, perhaps we too may draw upon both viewpoints.

[179] It is unclear to me what Gadamer means by 'Christ dancing' but I will take this is an indication of ecstatic and rhythmic movement, perhaps one that is purified or sanctified in some way.

[180] Gadamer writes: "The verse participates in the roundness of all creations and is like a circle, that good infinity about which Hegel speaks and which he opposes to the bad infinity of an unbounded movement and the continual self-over-reaching-of-oneself. This good infinity is the whole" (1992, 91). Hegel famously draws a distinction between two types of infinity. At one point he elucidates this difference by way of a well-chosen example, where the 'true' or 'good infinity' can be likened to an irrational number captured by a fraction such as 1/7, whereas 'bad infinity' can be likened to writing the same number as a decimal fraction, which essentially comes down to an endless row of numbers which cannot be fully captured through signs: 0.1428571429…; see Hegel (1995, 261-262).

[181] The ongoing nature of this endeavor relates to Hegel's bad infinity; see Risser (2002) who points to the importance of Hegel's bad infinity for Gadamer's thought.

be pointing to is that there is a true holistic experience that in some way persists despite this.

Walter Lammi considers Gadamer's understanding of the cultic and ritual and points out that "[r]hythmic music, chanting, dancing, and various kinds of exercises may all create group transcendence," and explains that Gadamer portrays the function of rhythmic sound as reducing all enunciations in favour of type of vital harmony (2008, 93). As has been pointed out in previous chapters, holistic experience is a crucial element of Gadamer's thought and rhythm is another variant of this emphasis. Lammi, noting the division between humans and animals in Gadamer's conception of ritual, states that "[t]o strive for divine experience represents the consummate goal of human community" and adds that "[t]he transcendence of human individuality takes us back to animal communion, albeit infused with the spirit of the divine" (2008, 94). As has been noted above, language is something exclusively human for Gadamer. However, he also writes that the process of understanding "is a life process in which a community of life is lived out," and both draws commonalities between the process of understanding that occurs in human conversation and that between animals and also points to the uniqueness of human linguistic experience and the disclosure of 'world' (2004, 443). Here we have both an association with life process, animality and presumably nature as a whole, but also a separation, which largely relates to the freedom, distancing, and universality which language provides and the relation to a meaningful human world. In a certain sense, we might say that the on-going process of coming to mutual agreement and understanding within language is an organic process of growth, but in such a way that there is an ideality of meaning that has both a proximity to and distance from the immediate sensual experience of nature. In this respect, it should be recalled that Gadamer mentions the "breathing of the speaker" in relation to poetic recitation and that dance is a physical activity, which points to a bodily aspect (although this isn't a strong focus in his thought) to rhythmic experience and intensified experiences of relationality for generally.[182]

[182] Fuyarchuk (2017) considers Gadamer's conception of rhythm and develops an understanding of it that incorporates the experience of the body and of nature, emphasizing the importance of the auditory aspects of Gadamer's thought in promoting participatory experience.

For Gadamer, the relation between part and whole is speculative, which we can see in his description of language (we considered a portion of the following quote in Chapter 5):

> [E]very word breaks forth as if from a center and is related to a whole, through which alone it is a word. Every word causes the whole of the language to which it belongs to resonate and the whole world-view that underlies it to appear. Thus every word, as the event of a moment, carries within it the unsaid, to which it is related by responding and summoning. (2004, 454)

Here linguistic experience connects us to a greater whole and the unsaid is an immanent possibility which can be expressed but never in its totality because of our human finitude. As we have considered above, given that words are connected to things, this seemingly suggests that the nature of reality as such may be somehow speculative. If so, that would incline Gadamer's thought towards a physics of lived experience as mediated by language. Hadot writes in respect to ancient philosophy that "[t]he goal of physics as a spiritual exercise was to relocate human existence within the infinity of time and space, and the perspective of the great laws of nature" (1995, 244). An aspect of this lived experience of physics in ancient thought, as Hadot notes in respect to Marcus Aurelius, is "the correspondence of all things, and the mutual implication of each thing in everything else" (1995, 244).[183] As we have seen in previous chapters, a variant of this interconnection between part and whole is a crucial aspect to Emerson's thought and explains the sympathy and commonality running through reality in which we participate. As cited in Chapter 6, Emerson writes in *Nature*: "A leaf, a drop, a crystal, a moment of time is related to the whole, and partakes of the perfection of the whole. Each particle is a microcosm and faithfully renders the likeness of the world" (1983, 29-30). For Emerson, each part is related to greater whole and we may work towards greater self-realization by expanding our awareness through experiencing how different aspects of nature bring us into a relation to a greater whole as an experience of our potential infinitude. With Emerson, the structure of nature relates to the

[183] Hadot draws parallels between what poetry, such as that of Goethe, could achieve in its readers and the physics of ancient philosophy (Hadot 1995, 244-245). It should be noted that Hadot maintains that the Stoic conception of the whole existing within a part does not rely on Stoic discourse and he points to how this experience may also be indicated within poetry (see Hadot, 1995, 260).

structure of mind and Gadamer's approach may be read as leading to something akin to this relational experience via linguistic emergence. In my view, Gadamer's thought is quite ambiguous and rather murky here; he neither wants to promote a form of cultural and linguistic constructivism and relativism, nor appeal to an objective view of reality that would either fall into scientific or rigid metaphysical conceptions. The way I would tend to read him is that there is a certain orderly and harmonious aspect to reality that when we linguistically engage with may bring this orderliness out, accentuate, and develop it in innovative ways. Language and world are interconnected in a fundamental way.

According to Emerson, one way of cultivating the experience of our higher Mind is through the experience of nature, and in this respect, Emerson is certainly an heir to symbolic perspectives that relate to the Book of Nature.[184] When we turn to nature we can learn more about ourselves; as Emerson writes in "The American Scholar," "the ancient precept, 'Know Thyself,' and the modern precept, 'Study nature,' become at last one maxim" (1983, 56). This points to Emerson's relevance to the hermeneutic process of self-understanding via the experience of nature. It is through entering into a harmonious relationship with nature that we may 'read' nature, as indicated when Emerson writes in *Nature* that "[a] life in harmony with nature, the love of truth and of virtue, will purge the eyes to understand her text," and that by degrees "the world shall be to us an open book, and every form significant of its hidden life and final cause" (1983, 25). Gadamer himself seems to indicate that nature is a rich source of meaning, when, as discussed earlier in this chapter, he points to the 'book of nature'. When we consider, as also examined earlier in this chapter, that it seems for Gadamer that nature could serve a type of corrective, we could tentatively say that perhaps nature can not only be understood, but also may help our self-understanding and bring our prejudices and even tradition itself into play for potential revision.

For Emerson, nature takes on an ancillary role in respect to Mind; as he writes in "The Method of Nature": "In the divine order, intellect is primary; nature, secondary; it is the memory of the mind. That which once existed in intellect as pure law, has now taken body as Nature" (1983, 118). Despite nature taking this second place, according to Emerson "we can use nature as

[184] See Greenham (2012) who discusses the importance of the idea of reading the book of nature for Emerson.

a convenient standard, and the meter of our rise and fall" as, unlike humans, "it cannot be debauched". That is, the experience of nature may help lead us out of distorted perspectives, both individual and communal. Because nature cannot be corrupted, "[w]e may […] safely study the mind in nature, because we cannot steadily gaze on it in mind; as we explore the face of the sun in a pool, when our eyes cannot brook his direct splendors" (1983, 118). Here we can clearly see that for Emerson, nature may serve as a type of corrective to improve our self-understanding. This explicit rendering of a positive role of nature to help correct human distortions or false prejudices could help inspire Gadamer's hermeneutics to incorporate a stronger role for nature in the process of self-understanding. For Emerson, the experience of nature is a route towards learning about Mind indirectly, and, as we have seen from Chapter 5, a symbolic approach to Nature is an important approach to encouraging self-understanding.

Gadamer himself points to how language itself plays such a role of helping provide some distance from illusory perspectives. Discussing Plato's famous turn to the *logoi*, Gadamer explains that "[i]n Socrates' eyes, the linguistic universe possesses more reality than immediate experience" and that "just as the sun—according to the famous metaphor—cannot be observed directly but only on the basis of its reflection in water, whoever who wants to get information about the true nature of things will achieve clarity sooner in the *logoi* than through deceptive sensory experience" (2016, 44).[185] As we pointed out above, for Gadamer language provides some distance from one's environment or immediate situation. Much as how for Emerson we may pass through nature to attain some distance from our distorted viewpoints, for Gadamer the experience of language gives some distance from the illusory aspects of sensual experience. So, both Gadamer and Emerson emphasize an intensified and relational experience of truth but differ in their focus on how that experience may be cultivated.

Emerson emphasizes the dynamic process of the experience of nature and states: "The method of nature: who could ever analyze it? That rushing stream will not stop to be observed" (1983, 19). He explains that "[e]very natural fact is an emanation, and that from which it emanates in an

[185] Both Gadamer's and Emerson's reference to reflection in water relate to Plato's account in *The Republic* of escaping the cave and entering the light, the reflections in water being a transition phase.

emanation also, and from every emanation is a new emanation. If anything could stand still, it would be crushed and dissipated by the torrent it resisted, and if it were a mind, would be crazed" (1983, 119). Here we can see the importance of Plotinus' conception of emanation for Emerson, which, as we have seen is also important for Gadamer, albeit in his case emphasized within language and tradition. For Emerson, such experience points to unities, such that "[w]hen we behold the landscape in a poetic spirit, we do not reckon individuals" (1983, 120), and movement is emphasized: "We can point nowhere to anything final; […] total nature is growing like a field of maize in July; is becoming something else; is in rapid metamorphosis" (1983, 121). This is an ecstatic experience of universal process beyond particular ends and our understanding. For Emerson, we may step out of our ordinary way of experiencing the world and enter this stream of ecstatic movement within nature. There are also commonalities between how Emerson views nature as a process and the emergence of meaning for Gadamer within language and tradition, as these both encourage the transcendence our individual points of view and dynamical evolution. In a certain sense, we might say that they each focus on different streams of emanation, Emerson on nature (although he certainly does consider culture as well) and Gadamer on language and tradition, and what we want to do is join these streams together to a greater extent.

In this context, it is helpful if we again consider Fuyarchuk's reading of Gadamer, which provides an interpretation of Gadamer far more oriented to nature than he is often be considered to be. Fuyarchuk points to the importance of symmetry and beauty in *Truth and Method* to support his contention that Gadamer's own thought is influenced by the Pythagorean conception of a harmony residing in nature (2017, 106-107). He also draws out other connections to nature in Gadamer's thought, bringing attention, for example, to how Gadamer draws upon biologist Jakob von Uexkull[186] to emphasize the commonality of life and community that humans have with nature (2017, 50). Fuyarchuk indicates that for Gadamer there are connections between how meaning unfolds within language and natural processes. He maintains that Gadamer's understanding of language

[186] The biologist Jacob Von Uexkull (1864-1944) offers a holistic account of nature, according to which organisms are subjects who interact with their environment in a meaningful way rather than by mere deterministic impulse.

encompasses aspects that "draw upon a transhistorical source," and supports this viewpoint by pointing to how Gadamer draws upon notions such as the Neo-Platonic conception of emanation with the idea of an outflow and fountain, the notion of *energeia*, and the Christian conception of the Incarnation. Fuyarchuk's writes that "the sounds of language produced in unison with others participate in the organic unfolding of meaning or harmonization of ideas in the same way, as a stream, fountain or any living organism grows" (2017, 51), which points to an affinity between the experience of language and natural processes. Fuyarchuk relates these perspectives to Gadamer's understanding of the inner word and rhythm and to how the experience of nature emerges rhythmically within language. Fuyarchuk's reading of Gadamer brings us a Gadamer quite steeped in nature, and, in this respect, although Gadamer prioritizes human expression via language and tradition, there seems to be an implicit underlying unity between humankind and nature.[187] Nevertheless, Fuyarchuk had to bring together many disparate and often little-developed strands of Gadamer's thought to formulate his interpretation and emphasize the Pythagorean aspects of Gadamer's thought. In my view, this points both to how Gadamer's thought may be productively developed in the direction of nature and also to how much of Gadamer's orientation to nature is implicit and in need of further elaboration.

Emerson Inspiring Gadamer's Hermeneutics Towards Nature

Emerson brings out the connection to nature in a far more explicit way than Gadamer does, so I will look to Emerson for inspiration to further consider a hermeneutic orientation to nature. Of course, there are differences between Emerson's and Gadamer's conceptions. Emerson incorporates metaphysical positions, such as when he points to the presence of what I would consider Mind and morality within humans; as he writes in "The Method of Nature": "in thy brain, the geometry of the City of God; in thy heart, the bower of love and the realms of right and wrong" (1983, 122). Nevertheless, when we

[187] In respect to how Gadamer sees language as being exclusively human, Fuyarchuk maintains that for Gadamer and Heidegger, "[i]n contrast to animals that live in environments, we have a lingual world still related to natural processes" (2017, 62). He adds that for Gadamer, "language defines our nature and for that reason shares in the essence of natural processes; namely a 'telos' unfolding from the process itself" (2017, 62).

consider that the experiences of beauty, order and harmony play an important role in Gadamer's aesthetics and how experiences of unity have practical and seemingly ethical consequences, there is evidently an important affinity between our two thinkers here, particularly when we consider the importance of dynamic movement for Emerson.

Dieter Schulz draws out commonalities between Gadamer, Emerson and Thoreau and highlights connections between thinking and the experience of nature. Schulz points to Emerson's aforementioned method of nature and the advantage for man by "adopting its 'ecstatical' method" (2012, 136). Schulz explains that Emerson's early thought related more to ecstatic moments, but that over time he came to replace this with a more liveable stance that would still hold on to a notions of transcendence (2012, 138). We have noted this transition in Emerson's thought towards approaches that emphasize focus and continuous effort to effect change in previous chapters. Schulz works to incorporate both ecstatic transcendence and a more step-by-step process, drawing upon Thoreau's essay "Walking," to explain that "[t]he activity of walking involves nothing less than making of ecstasy a method. *Ek-stasis*, the stepping out of oneself, this first step is followed by another step, by step after step, until it becomes a walk and thus a *methodos*" (2012, 138). This *methodos* involves a freeing from worldly engagements and attachments, and Schulz explains that "walking entails both a leave-taking and homecoming; shaking off the village makes possible a return, a return to our senses" (2012, 140). Schultz points the importance of the body in this process and writes, "as we manage to share its [nature's] path — we practice a method that redeems both body and mind and restores us to wholeness" (2012, 140). Important in this process is a sense of openness so we can move beyond our ordinary conceptions and intentions and participate in nature by following and responding to impulses from the outside. He indicates that "[s]uch a method involves not mastery and control but yielding and abandonment" and that "[t]he choice of direction emerges from a collaborative effort on the part of nature and that in us which responds most fully to nature's promptings" (2012, 143). As we have considered previously, Emerson points to the need to cease our ordinary habits of thought and enter into a participatory experience of nature that may lead us back to ourselves. Likewise, Gadamer as discussed in Chapter 2 and 3 encourages cultivating the ability to pursue the subject matter by following its promptings rather than falling into trying to manipulate and control. Schulz writes:

> As a hermeneutic activity, walking enacts the method of interpretation that Gadamer finds essential to an adequate understanding of our being-in-the-world. Such a method accepts the structural priority of the world, and instead of trying to master nature qua reality, it respects both the world's otherness and its kinship with us in acts not designed for mastery but meant to accompany things on their way. The true method is the activity of the thing itself as accompanied by thought. (2012, 149)

In this respect, the *methodos* that Schulz points to seems to me to be a very helpful formulation relating a number of themes in Gadamer's and Emerson's thought, connecting these to walking and engaging with and orienting to the world. Whether we are considering walking in nature or interpreting a text, there is a leaving of customary self-understanding through an openness to engage and participate in nature or text, and a return from which we may emerge changed.

If we continue with considering the importance of perception and how nature may be meaningfully experienced from Gadamer's hermeneutic viewpoint, Emerson would seem to have a great deal to offer given his strong focus on perception. For example, Emerson writes in his essay "Nature" (Second Series):

> The incommunicable trees begin to persuade us to live with them, and quit our life of solemn trifles. Here not history, or church, or state, is interpolated on the divine sky and the immortal year. How easily we might walk onward into the opening landscape, absorbed by new pictures, and by thoughts fast succeeding each other, until by degrees the recollection of home was crowded out of the mind, all memory obliterated by the tyranny of the present, and we were led in triumph by nature. (1983, 541-542)

For Emerson, the experience of nature can take us out of habitual patterns of understanding and limited and distorted customs and bring us back to ourselves.[188] Emerson's texts may not only encourage the reader to

[188] If this sounds like too romantic a conception of nature, for example, in regard to the positive impact experiences with nature may have, Weinstein, Przybylski and Ryan (2009) conducted four empirical studies and found that subjects immersed in nature (focusing on slides of nature or being in a room with four plants) tended to be more other-regarding and focused on more intrinsic aspirations (e.g. autonomy, relation to community and nature rather than external aspirations such as fame and wealth) and more generous than those immersed in non-natural settings (focusing on slides of cityscapes and having no plants in a room). This seems suggestive that the presence of nature may help people look more deeply within and encourage more open, generous and other-regarding behavior.

go out to nature to possibly experience what he is describing, but the very act of reading Emerson may help to prompt shifts in self-understanding. Brian Treanor (2014) points to the role that artworks and the written accounts of others and their narratives may play in creating changes in the reader. He points to the writings of John Muir and how they helped change people's viewpoints to encourage the protection of nature.[189] Treanor maintains that

> a person's worldview, like her personal identity, is fundamentally narrative. To get people to change their minds about, for example, climate change, it is necessary to address the underlying narrative into which facts about climate change fit or do not fit. Simply bombarding people with more information, more facts and arguments, is unlikely to have any effect. (2014, 196)

Emerson's viewpoints provide alternative ways of experiencing and envisaging nature; no longer is nature just an object outside of us as 'normal' viewpoints may suggest, but rather nature is seen as something we participate in. In a sense, Emerson is pointing to a re-enchantment of both nature and ourselves and his viewpoint promotes alternative narratives and perspectives that may help encourage a new and more profound understanding of nature. In this respect, as was mentioned in Chapter 4, reading was an important spiritual exercise in ancient thought and an important emphasis in Gadamer's hermeneutics is on the truth that we may find within tradition. Emerson's texts may serve as an example of how the interpretation of a text may help open the reader to change, where her prejudices may be brought up short and revised, in this case towards encouraging a revision of viewpoints and a self-understanding beyond the bifurcation of humans and nature.

Such perspectives may also help us see past existing societal narratives. Emerson was concerned about the superficial materialism of his times and for him the experience of nature could lead to meaningful spiritual experience that may bring the customs and values of society into question. To give another example, through his 'Walden experiment' Thoreau sought to live simply to free himself from the economically driven world and cultivate a more meaningful life. When he relayed his experience in his book *Walden*, he also provided a very different narrative from the ordinary view of

[189] Muir was influenced by both Emerson and Thoreau, and in fact he met Emerson in the Yosemite Valley when Emerson was in his old age.

what a good life is, which may inspire the reader towards a different measure of what matters and a revision in their self-understanding. Like the philosophical schools of antiquity which provided discourses and narratives promoting values that often differed with those cherished by society, thinkers such as Emerson and Thoreau provide alternative viewpoints that may promote self-transformation.

For Emerson, a lived physics or participatory experience of nature is achieved in the here and now. As discussed in Chapter 3, although in Emerson's view tradition can certainly inspire us, this is not as valuable as direct experience; as he writes in "Worship": "Forget your books and traditions, and obey your moral perceptions at this hour" (1983, 1062). There is arguably a tendency in Gadamer's thought not to forget our traditions and human 'world,' and this admonishment from Emerson is an important reminder not to be too caught up within human culture. Although we have pointed to instances where Gadamer considers nature, the fact still remains that Gadamer largely focusses on human history, whereas Emerson points to the interconnection between natural and human history. For Emerson, natural and cultural history are connected. In the essay "History," Emerson writes of both a common Mind to man and how man is intertwined with nature:

> [a]long with the civil and metaphysical history of man, another history goes forward daily,—that of the external world,—in which he is not less strongly implicated. He is the compend of time; he is also the correlative of nature. His power consists in the multitude of his affinities, in the fact that his life is intertwined with the whole chain of organic and inorganic being. (1983, 254)

This points to the strong sense of interconnection between humankind and her history and nature for Emerson. This relationality serves as an entry point for the human experience of nature. Emerson seeks to radicalize the experience of history to include nature, and points to a unity underlying both. For Gadamer we can explore human tradition, but Emerson's account provides multiple avenues of insight: within oneself, human history and nature, which really are all facets of an underlying unity. This is a process of self-understanding and self-realization, and I suggest that Emerson provides a helpful way to orient Gadamer's hermeneutics further towards nature and to expand tradition and language towards a fuller consideration of nature. Likewise, Gadamer's emphasis on language, when it is understood to incorporate the experience of nature as we have been suggesting in this

chapter, may provide a helpful way of conceiving the experience of nature in a less exotic form than Emerson's more metaphysical leanings.

An important theme in Gadamer's thought is recognition and remembering, meaning that there are important resources within tradition and language which we may tap into and develop. For Emerson, nature plays a similar role and may serve as inspiration for encouraging a broader conception of remembrance that incorporates nature.[190]

According to Gadamer, speaking is a self-forgetful act through which we may move beyond the propositional use of language to enter into a speculative relation to the whole. He notes that, as cited in Chapter 4, that "[i]n words we are at home. In words there is a kind of guarantee for what they say. These things are especially clear in the poetic use of language" (2007, 107). Being at home within language indicates a relational experience of truth for Gadamer. Coming home and being at home is also an important transcendentalist theme; Schulz points out that both Emerson and Thoreau have the same viewpoint of "nature as man's original house and by the idea that the true house will recapture the original harmony of man with nature" (2012, 121). When we consider Gadamer's notion of rhythm and its role in overcoming the gap between word and thing, we could perhaps say that when we find the right word we are at home in a more interconnected experience with nature. Whether this type of unity is experienced by being at home in poetic language or a heightened experience of Mind or oneness via nature, there is a radicalization towards a greater sense of interconnection and community. This is a process which fosters self-transformation and is relevant to philosophy as a practical activity that incorporates a connection between logic and physics.

Hadot: Perception, Aesthetics and the Experience of Nature in a Contemporary Context

In an interview, Hadot indicates that he finds the practice of physics as an exercise has always existed in philosophy, and in this respect, he points to Goethe's natural studies with their experiential approach and "despite certain extravagances, in German Romanticism" (2011, 95). Given the influence of Goethe and Romanticism in Emerson's thought (not to mention Gadamer's),

[190] It this respect, it may be noted that Fuyarchuk understands Gadamer's notion of recollection to include nature (2017, 109).

this again points to Emerson's relevance as a thinker who promotes a lived experience of physics in a modern context, as may Gadamer's hermeneutics if it is oriented further towards nature.

In the essay "The Sage and the World," Hadot considers how intensified experiences of interconnection and the world as world may be related to philosophy as a way of life in a contemporary context. In this respect, he raises the point that ancient philosophical viewpoints of wisdom may be out of date and acknowledges that "[t]he idea of universal reason no longer makes much sense" for modern man. Given this, he asks whether the "experience of the world qua world" may be open to modern man as "a path toward wisdom" (1995, 252). Hadot points to an approach of contemporary relevance by drawing upon phenomenological approaches and Henri Bergson's thought. He envisages perception as an entry point to encourage a transition from seeing things for ourselves to perceiving the world itself. In this respect, the experiences of self-transcendence that we find in both Gadamer's and Emerson's thought relates to this type of conversion. Hadot states that "a disinterested, aesthetic perception of the world can allow us to imagine what cosmic consciousness might signify for modern man" (1995, 255).[191] I think its noteworthy in this context that this transition parallels Gadamer's view mentioned in Chapter 5 that in contemporary thought aesthetics takes over the role that was formerly played by metaphysics. Hadot notes that "the modern artist consciously participates in cosmic life *as* he creates" and in relation to the artist Paul Klee, writes: "There is the fact that we plunge our roots into the same soil, and that we share a common participation in the cosmos. This means that the artist must paint in a state in which he *feels* his unity with the earth and the universe" (1995, 255). We may note parallels with Emerson's conceptions of participation with nature and we might also say that for Gadamer we sink our roots into and participate in the ongoing emergence of tradition. Hadot also draws upon Merleau-Ponty to explain that

> [t]he artistic process shares with the creative process of nature the characteristic of rendering things visible, causing them to appear. Merleau-Ponty laid great stress on this idea: "Art no longer imitates visible things, it makes things visible. It is the blueprint of the genesis of things. Paintings show

[191] Hadot employs different terms such as the aforementioned "view from above" to suggest experiences of disinterested interconnection but with different nuance.

> us how things become things and how *the* world becomes a world [...] how mountains, in our view, become mountains." (1995, 256, citing Merleau-Ponty, 1961, 217)

As we have seen both in this and previous chapters, Emerson's points to participatory aesthetic and spiritual experiences that have obvious affinities with these perspectives given his focus on aesthetic creation, expression, writing and the direct experience of nature. Gadamer notes that "[i]n language the reality beyond every individual consciousness becomes visible" (2004, 446), and the role of poetic language and art in his thought more generally points towards encouraging the experience of interconnections and insights that were previously unsaid or invisible. In "The Method of Nature," Emerson writes that "one who conceives the true order of nature […] beholds the visible as proceeding from the invisible" (1983, 119), which seems to find some commonality with Merleau-Ponty's understanding of "the invisible of this world, that which inhabits this world, sustains it, and renders it visible, its own interior possibility, the Being of this being" (1968, 151). I think that the way Hadot draws upon phenomenology and aesthetic perspectives is a very helpful way linking ancient philosophical viewpoints that promote an interconnection to nature with a modern perspective that incorporates creative emergence. Gadamer and Emerson's viewpoints are in this spirit of dynamic creativity and in my view may be helpfully drawn upon to consider an interconnection to nature that is relevant for philosophy as a way of life in a contemporary context. We will consider such a process of emergence further below.

Festivals of Culture and Nature

Human community is something that is very important to Gadamer's thought and his conception of the festival reflects this. Through festive experience the separations between people are overcome, where judgments, societal roles and hierarchies between individuals are set aside in favor of a common sense of unity. In Gadamer's essay "Isolation as a Symptom of Self-Alienation," he considers a sense of solitude as opposed to isolation. According to Gadamer, isolation is an experience of loneliness and deprivation, whereas solitude can be a positive experience of interconnection:

> There is […] a lovely Greek phrase of Euripedes: "To embrace friends, that is God." What the Greeks wanted to bring to expression here is the same as what Hölderlin once called the social sphere that is God. In this conceptual definition, the opposite of solitude is implied: to stand in a communal sphere and to be supported by something communal. (1998, 102)

Here we have a conception that relates human community and friendship to the divine and differentiates between solitude and isolation. I want to draw particular attention to a passage in this essay that occurs when Gadamer writes of a philosopher's path as a place where one can walk alone and the motivation of seeking out such a place to walk:

> [W]hat is sought in the quest for solitude is not actually solitude, but "abiding" with something, undisturbed by anyone or anything else. So what one is looking for on the philosophers' path is not really solitude at all, but the soft breathing of nature that takes one up into his life as if through a gesture of sympathy. (1998, 103)

This sentiment seems to point to an experience of nature that is a type of participation and community. Based on this, and in conjunction with many points we have considered previously that are suggestive of the importance of nature for Gadamer, it could be argued that the human community that Gadamer extensively focusses on could and should be connected to nature to a greater extent, so that much in the way one may overcome isolation through human solidarity we may also experience solidarity with nature as well.

Emerson's account of the experience of nature is 'festive'. In *Nature*, Emerson indicates that "[i]n the woods, is perpetual youth. Within these plantations of God, a decorum and sanctity reign, a perennial festival is dressed" (1983, 10), and after this reference to a festival he moves into the powerful experience of unity and interconnection in his transparent eyeball passage as discussed in Chapter 6. If we consider a passage cited there, "[t]he greatest delight which the fields and woods minister, is a suggestion of an occult relation between man and the vegetable. I am not alone and unacknowledged. They nod to me, and I to them" (1983, 11), this seems to find parallel with Gadamer's viewpoint of the festival that points to a unifying experience, in this case between Emerson himself and nature. Gadamer writes that a festival, as cited in Chapter 5 and a part of which reads "allow[s] no separation between one person and another. A festival is

an experience of community and represents community in its most perfect form. A festival is meant for everyone" (1986b, 39). That is, there is a type of profound holism and universality beyond our habitual associations and human divisions and sense of self. Elsewhere Emerson incorporates the bodily and provides a striking vision of a festival as an intensified experience of unity in his 1844 essay "Nature" (Second Series):

> My house stands in low land, with limited outlook, and on the skirt of the village. But I go with my friend to the shore of our little river, and with one stroke of the paddle, I leave the village politics and personalities, yes, […] and pass into a delicate realm of sunset and moonlight, too bright almost for spotted man to enter without noviciate and probation. We penetrate bodily this incredible beauty; we dip our hands in this painted element: our eyes are bathed in these lights and forms. A holiday, a villeggiatura, a royal revel, the proudest, most heart-rejoicing festival that valor and beauty, power and taste, ever decked and enjoyed, establishes itself on the instant. These sunset clouds, these delicately emerging stars, with their private and ineffable glances, signify it and proffer it. I am taught the poorness of our invention, the ugliness of towns and palaces. (1983, 543)

In this description, Emerson traverses the common which leads up to an experience of the miraculous and sublime, points to a festival, and in no uncertain terms gives pride of place to the experience of the interconnection with nature as a vantage point to recognize the foibles of ordinary human pursuits. With this, I propose to take Gadamer's conception of the festival, and with a sense of interpretive play, draw upon Emerson's conceptions of interconnection with nature in order to extend our potential for festive experience to the natural world and all that is. If we remember from Gadamer's description of how a festival is made for everyone and if someone does not participate they exclude themselves, we might ask ourselves: in our materialistic and scientistic culture, which many thinkers have criticized as separating us from nature, do we not only destroy nature on this basis, but exclude ourselves from the 'festival' of life? To what extent are we drawn into a "mean egotism," to use Emerson's words, be it locked within our own or cultural assumptions that sever us from a more holistic experience of nature?

For Hadot, philosophy as a way of life is training for wisdom, which if done successfully is a life of wisdom within the ancient conception of philosophy. When discussing the contemplation of nature, Hadot mentions a

passage by Philo of Alexandria, according to which the practice of wisdom leads to peace and joy, and further, "it goes without saying that such men, rejoicing in their virtues, make of their whole lives a festival". Hadot mentions that the last lines (of his more extensive quote) refer to an aphorism from Diogenes the Cynic and quoted by Plutarch, that reads "[d]oes not a good man consider every day a festival?" (1995, 98). In the essay "Heroism," Emerson remarks, "[l]ife is a festival only to the wise" (1983, 373). The theme of interconnection has been running through our consideration of Gadamer's, Emerson's, and Hadot's thought. For Hadot, the sense of oneness with all that is was an important part of the ancient philosophy, and I believe the dual conception of the festival of Gadamer and Emerson being developed here, where the festive incorporates both the human and nature, can be helpful for articulating and potentially promoting such experience in a contemporary context.

Anthropocentrism and Eco-centrism

Both Gadamer and Emerson are anthropocentric thinkers, but as we have seen, Emerson's approach has a greater emphasis on the interconnection with nature. The tension in Emerson's thought between interconnection with and subservience of nature is seen in the following passage from Emerson's essay "Nature" (Second Series) which I will divide into two parts:

> We talk of deviations from natural life, as if artificial life were not also natural. The smoothest curled courtier in the boudoirs of a palace has an animal nature, rude and aboriginal as a white bear, omnipotent to its own ends, and is directly related, there amid essences and billetsdoux [love letters], to Himmaleh [Himalayan] mountain-chains, and the axis of the globe. If we consider how much we are nature's, we need not be superstitious about towns, as if that terrific or benefic force did not find us there also, and fashion cities. Nature who made the mason, made the house. We may easily hear too much of rural influences.

Here we find a remarkable articulation of the fundamental unity between humankind and nature and an indication that nature is with us wherever we are, where there is seemingly little distinction between nature and culture. However, as Emerson continues, we find a prime example of his residual anthropocentrism:

> The cool disengaged air of natural objects, makes them enviable to us, chafed and irritable creatures with red faces, and we think we shall be as grand as they, if we camp out and eat roots, but let us be men instead of woodchucks, and the oak and the elm shall gladly serve us, though we sit in chairs of ivory on carpets of silk. (1983, 548)

Here nature is to serve humans, a clearly anthropocentric conception. In this respect, although Emerson provides a fluid vision of the interrelation between humans and nature, it is slanted towards a human emphasis and seems at times to be found wanting in terms of respect for nature itself. As we saw in Chapter 2, Gadamer encourages cultivating a respect for the other. There it was discussed that such an approach may help overcome the impetus to subserviate the other to one's own aims, fostering a transition towards respecting them as a Thou. In my view, it would be helpful to draw upon this model of mutual respect to encourage the respect of nature. Gadamer actually seems to point towards this possibility:

> We may perhaps survive as humanity if we would be able to learn that we may not simply exploit our means of power and effective possibilities, but must learn to stop and respect the other as an other, whether it is nature or the grown cultures of peoples and nations; and if we would be able to learn to experience the other and the others, and the other of our self, in order to participate with one another. (1992, 235-236)

Although this is couched in terms of human survival (that is, anthropocentrically), this is an example of Gadamer's willingness to respectfully consider nature. I would like to draw upon this conception to help temper Emerson's viewpoint; that is, if we combine the strong interconnection with nature that Emerson holds with Gadamer's sense of respecting nature as the other, this "fusion of horizons," to use Gadamer's term, may promote a more participatory and respectful relation to nature.

Emerson also has the tendency to look past or through nature towards the spiritual and Mind within it. For example, in *Nature*, Emerson writes "[t]he immobility or bruteness of nature, is the absence of spirt; to pure spirit, it is fluid, it is volatile, it is obedient" (1983, 48). On the one hand there is a valuable conception of interconnection with nature in Emerson's thought, and on the other hand there is a diminishment of nature in itself. We should also note that is nuanced, because there are passages that may support more consideration for nature (and we will consider this further below).

However, it should be mentioned that Buell (1996) has influentially argued that environmental thought in America began with Thoreau and was further developed by thinkers such as John Muir.

As we saw in Chapter 5, Gadamer's conception of the symbol is a form of presentation that stands in itself. This presentational account of experience runs through his hermeneutics, where expression and emergence and the form that it appears within has a productive value. If we consider this account in relation to nature, it would suggest that materiality itself has some productive value. In fact, Joan Stanbaugh, considering Gadamer's conception of the festival and autonomous time, points to how Gadamer follows Schelling rather than Hegel in respect to the value of art over philosophy and maintains that an essential aspect of art is "the inclusion of nonconceptual 'nature' with its sensual concreteness" (1997, 134). Although Emerson isn't attempting to remove all nature or to conceive everything in terms of the concept, there is a tendency in his thought to move past nature and materiality. I think that if we take Gadamer's presentational account of experience and extend it to the value of the concrete materiality of nature and relate it to Emerson's viewpoints, this would provide an important counter-balance against his tendency to move through or not adequately consider materiality.

This line of thought could of course be further developed through reference to other thinkers; Goethe would be a natural choice given the importance of nature and affinities of his thought with Emerson's. Van Cromphout (1990) points to the influence of Goethe on Emerson in presenting his case for an "anti-idealist" reading of Emerson, which includes nature being barely distinguishable from spirit. While Van Cromphout provides examples to support this viewpoint, he also recognizes that there are many passages in Emerson's works which support "an idealistic Spirit-Nature hierarchy, and though Emerson often considers transcendence of nature to be a prerequisite for an encounter with spirit," nevertheless, he points out that Emerson "at other times emphatically recognizes the equivalence of nature and spirit, and hence the possibility of man's encountering spirit *in* nature" (1990, 45). Van Cromphout indicates the importance of unity between spirit in nature and that in this unity "nature is spirit, or provides spirit with a chance to achieve phenomenal reality and in the process to 'complete' itself" (1990, 46). Put in terms of Emerson's experience of Mind and Spirit, to the extent that he follows Goethe such an

account would be presentational in that Mind itself relies on its phenomenal realization to dynamically instantiate and develop itself. As Van Cromphout notes, Goethe's view points to the search for the idea within our experience and "[t]he idea is inseparable from its effects; only through its effects do we have a chance to grasp its essence" (1990, 43), which may be seen in contrast to Platonic approaches according to which the phenomena "inadequately reflects the realm of ideas" (1990, 44). For Gadamer, "[t]o come into language does not mean that a second being is acquired. Rather, what something present itself as belongs to its own being" (2004, 470). In Gadamer's view, there is no two-world Platonism, but rather meaning emerges within language in the here and now.

Certainly, at times Emerson indicates an appreciation for the materiality of nature, such as when he points to a type of sheltering and experience of the earth which relates to the cosmos; as he writes in "Nature" (Second Series): "We nestle in nature, and draw our living as parasites from her roots and grains, and we receive glances from the heavenly bodies, which call us to solitude, and foretell the remotest future" (1983, 542). This is a surprising diminishment of the human down to "parasites," and also noteworthy is the type of harboring we receive within nature. However, rather than attempting to definitively decide on the extent to which Emerson's respects nature in its materiality and equates nature and spirit, I would say that there are aspects of Emerson's thought that point in this direction, but further emphasis and development along this path may be warranted. So, whether or not Emerson followed Goethe or the type of presentational account of experience that Gadamer provides all the way in this respect is secondary to the possibility that we may relatively easily incorporate such viewpoints within Emerson's thought.

As we have discussed above, affinities have been noted between Gadamer's and Goethe's thought. For example, Bortoft (2012) points to similarities such as the process of dynamic emergence and self-differencing of the one and the many found within Goethe's understanding of nature and the dynamic process of emergent meaning within Gadamer's approach to interpretation and self-differencing within language. Goethe also influenced Gadamer's understanding of the symbol (see Gadamer 2004, 2008). However, in certain ways Gadamer seems to fail to transfer this type of thinking to nature. For example, in addition to his general lack of focusing on nature, when considering how the beginning of something relates to the

end in relation to teleological development, he sees that development as only relating to what was inherent at the beginning in respect to nature. This means that that such "development is merely a becoming visible, a maturing process" which he relates to "the biological growth of plants and animals" (2016, 7). In contrast, history relates to the new and innovative. Gadamer writes: "Destiny […] means constant unpredictability. The concept of development […] brings to expression the fundamental difference that exists between the process-quality of nature and the fluctuating accidents and incidents of human life. What comes to expression here is a primordial opposition between nature and spirit" (2016, 7). Here Gadamer could be criticized for making too strong of a distinction between human and natural development, implying that it is only through human history that a true form of innovation and freedom is possible. In respect to Emerson, Greenham makes a distinction between Schelling, who attributed freedom to nature and Emerson who did not: "[U]nlike Schelling, Emerson did not come to extend freedom to nature itself more broadly conceived. For Emerson only human will is one with the Eternal and as such is Necessary" (2015, 133). Thus, we can see that both Gadamer and Emerson do not extend the possibility of freedom to nature.

Goethe, in contrast, had a vision of the active role that nature may play in its development. Bortoft explains that "Goethe spoke of the particular individual plant as being a 'conversation' between the living organisms and its environment. This metaphor draws our attention to the plant's *active* contribution to the form which it takes in specific conditions," (2012, 78). According to Astrida Orle Tantillo, "[i]n contrast to Aristotle […] Goethe did not believe that ends are static or predetermined," and she explains that the goals of natural organisms were always changing and creatively striving towards increasing complexity and self-overcoming, which for Goethe applied to all of nature (2002, 8). If we consider Gadamer's and Emerson's denying the possibility for truly creative development in nature as a deficiency, this in any case is a defect that can be relatively easily remedied; all we need to do is apply the same type of dynamic emergence that Gadamer develops in relation to history and stop maintaining that language is exclusively human, and for Emerson follow Goethe in extending freedom to nature and placing a greater value on nature in itself. In this respect, Goethe would certainly be a good choice to draw upon for inspiration to open

Gadamer's and Emerson's viewpoints further towards nature given the similarities between their thought.

Needless to say, even with an anthropocentric orientation, attempting to live an experience of participation and interconnection has the potential for radical change. Emerson, although his position is anthropocentric, points to an evolutionary possibility for nature to participate more fully in ongoing spiritual self-realization. Let us consider a passage where Emerson speaks of the dynamic aspect of nature:

> If we look at her work, we seem to catch a glance of a system in transition. Plants are the young of the world, vessels of health and vigor; but they grope ever upward towards consciousness; the trees are imperfect men, and seem to bemoan their imprisonment, rooted in the ground. The animal is the novice and probationer of a more advanced order. (1983, 547)

In Emerson's view, organisms in nature can evolve to the experience of humans and presumably beyond, just as humans need to grow into further vistas. Although there is a hierarchy inherent in Emerson's point of view, there is no insurmountable gap between language and 'world' and nature. In this respect, I think Emerson's viewpoint could inspire revising Gadamer's views of language to bring it closer to nature. If we consider, as cited above, that for Emerson "[t]he incommunicable trees begin to persuade us to live with them, and quit our life of solemn trifles" (1983, 541), perhaps we might even attempt to consider this rhythmically; for example, perhaps tree life has a certain rhythm which we could even conceptualize as a language to which we may attune to and which may dynamically emerge via poetic language.

Now, in whatever ways we may find Emerson lacking in terms of respecting nature in itself, we could also draw upon later thinkers within the American tradition of the philosophy of nature and literature to inspire this transition. For example, Thoreau's further emphasis on the appreciation of nature and John Muir's stronger eco-centric perspectives would be good candidates, as they were both influenced by Emerson, but their own perspectives moved towards a stronger appreciation of nature in itself. For example, Schulz draws upon Thoreau to point to an earthiness in nature that is also found within ourselves in his consideration of *methodos* in respect to Emerson, Thoreau and Gadamer**.** In my view, promoting such an 'earthy' orientation is helpful as the body and bodily experience and bodily link to nature is not something that garners much attention in Emerson's or

Gadamer's thought and could bear further emphasis and development. Given Hadot characterization of the non-bodily nature of "'meditation' as an 'exercise' of reason" (1995, 59),[192] we may well imagine that a greater consideration of the bodily may be an important aspect of transitioning ancient philosophical perspectives and practices into the present.

John Muir's writings have long inspired environmental thought. In them he questions anthropocentric assumptions such as when he writes, "[t]he world, we are told, was made especially for man – a presumption not supported by all the facts" (2000, 160). He criticizes this viewpoint, remarking that "it never seems to occur to these far-seeing teachers that Nature's object in making animals and plants might possibly be first of all the happiness of each one of them, not the creation of all for the happiness of one [man]" (2000, 160). This of course is a strong rebuke of anthropocentric viewpoints and Muir's view is an alternative way of seeing the world that is respectful of nature. Muir also points towards ways in which our anthropocentrism may limit potential interactions and communication with nature: "Plants are credited with but dim and uncertain sensation, and minerals with positively none at all. But why may not even a mineral arrangement of matter be endowed with sensation of a kind that we in our blind exclusive perfection can have no manner of communication with?" (2000, 161). These radical points of view indicate the possibility of communicating with nature and nature with us to inspire change in our understanding of nature and ourselves and our behavior towards nature. If we consider the idea of nature as being part of a community with humans, it is a striking one which has the potential to invoke a radical reorientation of perspective. In this respect, Gadamer's previously mentioned aesthetic experience of "[t]his art thou!" […] 'Thou must alter thy life!'" (2008, 104) may take on far broader implications when considered in the light of eco-centric viewpoints.

Emerson, Thoreau, and Muir may be seen as a chain of thinkers with a strong interconnection to nature shifting from an anthropocentric emphasis (Emerson), to Thoreau with a stronger appreciation for nature in her materiality but still emphasizing its importance for his own and human

[192] Hadot states: "Unlike the Buddhist mediation practices of the Far East, the Greco-Roman philosophical mediation is not linked to a corporeal attitude but is a purely rational, imaginative, or intuitive exercise that can take extremely varied forms" (1995, 59).

experience more generally, and on to Muir who sees nature as of value in and of itself. Rather than seeing this as either/or situation, I would point to these thinkers as representing a spectrum of philosophical positions ranging between the anthropocentric and eco-centric. Although it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to map out this spectrum in detail, I would envisage the possibility of a more fluid interconnection to nature that may be modulated from more anthropocentric to more eco-centric perspectives to promote greater understanding of our interconnection with, respect for, and preservation of nature while still appreciating the difference of our unique human experience and aspirations. A prime hermeneutic virtue is that of openness and flexibility and developing a fluid appreciation for such a range of thought could be seen as an example of a philosophical practice, where each perspective may provide unique avenues of self-transformation and environmental discourse.

Contemplation of Nature, *Physis*, and Emergent Thinking

As we discussed in Chapter 6, a potential practice is just to simply contemplate nature. This could also take the form of a very simple foray into nature, such as one that Emerson recounts in his journal, from April 26-28, 1838:

> Yesterday P.M. I went to the Cliff with Henry Thoreau. Warm, pleasant, misty weather which the great mountain amphitheater seems to drink in with gladness. A crow's voice filled all the miles of air with sound. A bird's voice, even a piping frog enlivens a solitude & makes world enough for us. At night I went out into the dark & saw a glimmering star & heard a frog & Nature seemed to say Well do not these suffice? Here is a new scene, a new experience. Ponder it, Emerson, & not like the foolish world hanker after thunders & multitudes & vast landscapes, the sea or Niagara. (1982, 185)

Here Emerson is pointing to enjoying the simplicity of being in nature and the enlivening aspects of it. He indicates the value of the present moment in the here and now and of engaging with what is here rather than thinking of another place or that the 'grass is greener' somewhere else than where he is in the moment.

Emerson's method of nature and how Schulz (2012) draws upon it to point to a *methodos* which he relates to walking would seem to be a helpful approach to encourage stepping past our ordinary ways of thought and

engaging the world and following paths of thought and experiences indicated by nature. In my view, this works quite well with the type of contemporary focus on engaging the world *qua* world that Hadot points to in "The Sage and the World" that we discussed above. Of course, Thoreau's "Walking," which Schulz draws upon, could also serve as helpful inspiration, as could Emerson's writings on nature and accounts of the many forays into nature made by John Muir and many other thoughtful accounts of nature that may be found elsewhere in philosophy and literature.

Building on the exercise of contemplating nature suggested in Chapter 6, let us further consider *physis* as a process of dynamic emergence within both nature and art, which we considered in relation to Gadamer's thought earlier in this chapter. As we have seen, the process of emergence within nature and human life is also a crucial aspect of Emerson's thought. Rather than experiencing entities in nature as static, here we may attempt to enter into experiencing the process of their arising and abiding for a time and the possible subsequent withdrawal and concealment.[193] In this respect, a practice in relation to nature that in some way brings us in contact with the natural process of emergence may be valuable. For example, a very simple practice to help foster an appreciation for the dynamic movement of becoming in nature could be the contemplation of a growing plant or flower. One could start with, for example, a young plant as it grows from a seed or a fast-growing flower bulb, to contemplate at times over a series of days the process of dynamic emergence and withdrawal. This could bring us into the rhythm and movement of such a natural process.[194] In this respect, Goethe's approaches to nature to may be quite helpful to consider as they provide far more developed ways of contemplating the dynamic movement of nature, of which the above practice is only a simple indication. Hadot explains that Goethe's approach to intuitive thought with its emphasis on movement and growth is like the Greek understanding of *phusis* as a "formative impulse" (2006, 254) that goes from the inward outward. Hadot points to how Goethe's approach involves the attentive perception of nature and carefully following the forms as they arise, move, and develop and staying with the

[193] See Thorsteinsson (2015) for a consideration of the process of coming into presence and withdrawal within Heidegger´s thought.

[194] When Schulz considers the distinction that Emerson makes between *natura naturata* (nature passive) and *natura naturans* (nature's creativity), he points to "[t]he flip-side of nature growing, becoming […] is nature disappearing, dying" (2012, 135).

phenomenon. Although it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to consider Goethean approaches in any detail, Bortoft points to the reorientation in perception from abstract thought to the experience of natural phenomenon through the senses (for example, observing leaf sequences on a tree). He then points to another stage of "'exact sensorial imagination'" (2012, 54) by which one recreates the perceived phenomenon in one's mind, staying true to it as concretely as possible. This is to encourage making the outwardly experienced phenomenon more inward, to bring "the phenomena into ourselves" and "become participant in the phenomena instead of an onlooker" (2012, 54-55). According to Bortoft, "[a]s we follow this practice of living into the phenomenon, we find that it begins to live in us" (2012, 55).[195]

Artistic and cultural creations more generally are also forms of dynamic emergence. Richardson writes in respect to Emerson thought that "[t]he creation of a work of literature mimics the creation of the world, mimics the creativity of God or of Nature" (2009, 61). We might also consider that the act of writing of a philosophical paper may be seen in this light, a process of creative emergence which may perhaps be seen as a practice of *phusis*. At a very basic level, even the arising of a thought in the mind or ideas as they emerge and evolve through history could be focal points for contemplation. As we have discussed above, Hadot points to creating an artwork as a way of participating with nature. Hadot writes:

> The painter may paint in a state in which he feels his deep unity with the earth and the universe. Here the point is no longer to discover a secret of the world's fashioning but to undergo an experience of identification with the creative movement of forms, of with *phusis* in the original sense of the word; to abandon oneself to the "torrent of the world," according to Cézanne's expression. (2006, 226)

This would seem to find resonance with Emerson's method of nature and Goethean viewpoints, and what Hadot seems to be pointing to here is that this is a process which we do not need to understand but simply participate in. If, as quoted previously, for Gadamer, "*[b]eing that can be understood is language*" (2004, 470), here being does not need to be

[195] See also Colquhoun and Ewald (2011), who develop Goethean approaches to incorporate both the careful observation of nature and artistic expression.

understood but rather is experienced and comes forth through aesthetic expression.

The practice of philosophy itself may help lead towards more dynamic thought. Hadot points to the importance of entering into the flow of nature and the inclination in twentieth-century philosophical thought to reject abstract accounts of the world's existence in favor of appreciating "the mystery of existence in the world, and of a lived contact with the inexplicable surging-forth of reality, or *phusis* in the original meaning of the word" (2006, 314). This type of thinking is found within Heidegger and Gadamer's thought and Bortoft (2012) points to how phenomenology and hermeneutics promote a type of thinking that moves past metaphysical distinctions between what is and its appearance and rather attends to the experience of coming-into-being. Bortoft explains that this as a process of moving past the downstream distinction of a subject separate from an object towards an upstream experience of a linguistic emergence. Learning a phenomenological and hermeneutic approach thus may play an important role for philosophy as a way of life in a contemporary context. In my view, this approach would dovetail in ways with many of the aesthetic and intuitive approaches considered in relation to Emerson and the importance of creative movement in his thought as considered in this and previous chapters; as Emerson writes in the essay "Intellect," "God offers to every mind its choice between truth and repose. Take which you please,— you can never have both" (1983, 425). In this respect, really any interpretation, thought, act or creation is a form of emergence, and when we begin to acknowledge that from this perspective life is a moving opportunity rather than a static state, this may open further creative possibility for change.

Conclusion

In conclusion, in this chapter we have considered the connection between the logic and physics. We have explored how there are indications that Gadamer's hermeneutics considers the interconnection to nature, but that these generally need further development. It has been suggested that Emerson may be drawn upon to help further orient Gadamer's thought to nature. As an example of this, Gadamer's conception of the festival was expanded to better incorporate nature by drawing upon Emerson. It was further considered that Gadamer's presentational account of experience

could be drawn upon to help temper some of the transcendental excesses of Emerson's thought. Thinkers such as Goethe, Thoreau and Muir were considered to help relate Gadamer's and Emerson's thought towards more eco-centric viewpoints. A variety of practical approaches were presented, including Hadot's connection between aesthetic and phenomenological viewpoints and what he calls cosmic-consciousness, Emerson's method of nature, and how this has been explored and developed by Dieter Schulz and connected with Thoreau's and Gadamer's thought, the experience of *phusis* by contemplating a natural object with its movement and growth, and how this may also be related to the creation of such works as philosophy papers. Approaches to thought that encourage an experience of a process of dynamic emergence were also considered as a philosophical practice. These practices are suggested practical approaches for a present-day application of philosophy as a way of life that incorporates a lived experience of physics that relates to logic.

Chapter 8 – Universality and Philosophical Practice in a Contemporary Context

As has been discussed in previous chapters, living according to reason is an important conception for Hadot. This will be considered further in this final chapter, as well as how a lived logic, ethics and physics may be conceived in a contemporary context. Specifically, an understanding of transcendence and universality will be explored that considers process and movement, and we will address the question of what such an understanding this imply for philosophy as a way of life as it is applied to the present-day. Further consideration is also given to philosophical practices, such as the importance of focusing on the present moment, the role of individuality and the practical consequences of holistic viewpoints.

To Live According to Reason

As we have seen, Hadot's conception of philosophy as a way of life emphasizes practice. As we discussed in Chapter 1, Hadot points to the importance of what he calls an "existential option," which was a choice of life and desire to convert one's lifestyle to live in a certain way in accordance with the particular philosophical school an individual chose to join (see Hadot, 2004). Nevertheless, there is an important connection between theory and practice. As Hadot notes, "[t]his existential option, in turn, implies a certain vision of the world, and the tasks of philosophical discourse will therefore be to reveal and rationally justify this existential option, as well as this representation of the world" (2004, 3). As Hadot recognizes in respect to ancient thought, a philosophical way of life was important but so was discourse, "which justifies, motivates, and influences this choice of life". Based on this he concludes that "[p]hilosophy and philosophical discourse thus appear to be simultaneously incommensurable and inseparable" (2004, 172). That is, both theory and practice are important and cannot be reduced into or separated from one another.

This is important to consider in relation to Hadot's emphasis on practice leading discourse and cutting away any outmoded forms of discourse that

were previously attached to practices from ancient thought. However, in my opinion if we do this without subsequently providing a discourse and theory, this may leave practices and choices of life lacking in suitable discourses to support them. In this respect, sometimes Hadot seems to leave what discourse may be appropriate to the contemporary practice of philosophy as a way of life rather underdetermined. For example, when considering living by Stoic perspectives that involve universal reason, he indicates that we should live according to reason. But what exactly does this mean? For example, is reason something that is pure, universal and unchanging? Is it something that is limited to humans or is it something that runs through all reality? What happens when we have different conceptions of what is reasonable? Etc. My point is that it would be helpful to have something more tangible around an understanding of reason to rationally support the choice of life that the individual chooses. In this respect, it may be helpful to 'clothe' practices inspired by ancient philosophy with modern theories to support them. For example, we might say that within the framework of Gadamer's hermeneutics, when we engage other people and our historical tradition and follow the subject matter we may work to concretely live our lives in a reasonable way. Thus, just as a Stoic could call on a Stoic dogma[196] related to universal reason to help reorient herself, the hermeneutically inspired thinker when being 'unreasonable' (for example, dogmatically following their prejudices even when it is apparent they may be incorrect) could appeal to the theoretical basis of Gadamer's hermeneutics; for

[196] For example, in a discussion of practice in relation to Marcus Aurelius, Hadot remarks that "[w]e must, then, not only act in conformity with the theorems of the art of living and the fundamental dogmas [of Stoicism], but also keep present to our consciousness the theoretical foundations that justify them" (2001, 42). Hadot explains that "[a] dogma is a universal principle which founds and justifies a specific practical conduct, and which can be formulated in one or in several propositions" (2001, 36). Hadot notes that one of the formulations for Marcus Aurelius was "[t]he nature of the good […] is moral good *(to kalon);* while that of evil is moral evil *(to aischron)*" and explains that "[t]his condensed form is sufficient to evoke the theoretical demonstration of which they were the subject, and it allows the inner disposition which was a result of his clear view of these principles—that is, the resolution to do good—to be re-awakened within his soul" (2001, 37-38).

example, the need for openness to the other and universality, be it to a text or a person.[197]

For Gadamer, reason is something that is carried out in practice and solidarity with others and reason is experienced historically: "Reason exists for us only in concrete, historical terms—i.e., it is not its own master but remains constantly dependent on the given circumstances in which it operates" (2004, 277).[198] Put this way, when we encounter the subject matter in the course of conversation and human life and submit to it rather than following our own individual preconceptions, we live more according to reason. As Gadamer states: "Practice is conducting oneself and acting in solidarity. Solidarity, however, is the decisive condition and basis of all social reason. There is a saying of Heraclitus, the 'weeping' philosopher: The *logos* is common to all, but people behave as if each had a private reason. Does this have to remain this way?" (1983b, 87). The impetus within Gadamer's hermeneutics of submitting to the subject matter of conversation or a traditional text to encounter more universal viewpoints could be seen as a process of living according to reason as it emerges within language and tradition.[199] As we cited in Chapter 2, for Gadamer "[l]anguage is the language of reason itself" (2004, 402). Hadot writes, when considering living according to reason and its contemporary applicability, that "[i]n the words of Marcus Aurelius: 'Although everything happens at random, don't you, too, act at random.' In this way, we can accede concretely to the universality of the cosmic perspective, and the wonderful mystery of the presence of the universe" (1995, 212, citing Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, 10, 28, 3). We might draw parallels between this and Gadamer's view of not behaving as if we had our own reason; we learn to submit ourselves to universal perspectives. As we have seen in our discussion in Chapter 7, Hadot raises the point that Stoic perspectives of universal reason may be obsolete, and so draws upon artists and philosophers inspired by aesthetic viewpoints to point to a model of participation in the process of dynamic emergence. Here I would suggest that Gadamer position parallels this type of dynamic

[197] Likewise, perhaps Gadamer's statement as cited previously in respect the experience that a work of art, "[t]his thou art!' […] 'Thou must alter thy life!'" (2008, 111) may be seen as an 'dogma,' aphorism, or viewpoint to draw upon.

[198] This is another instantiation of the importance of presentation for Gadamer.

[199] Tradition and language should not be seen as separate; as Gadamer writes: "*Verbal form and traditionary content cannot be separated in the hermeneutic experience"* (2004, 438)

emergence in respect to how reason may emerge within language and so may provide a discourse around what it means to live according to reason in a contemporary context. As Patricia Johnson explains:

> Practical reasoning is reasoning that takes tradition, the past, and acts out of it in the present. Training in practical reasoning does not teach us a rigid structure that must be duplicated; rather, the training is in the movement of play, of joining in in such a way as to grasp meaning and understanding. Training in practical reasoning requires participation which is both a doing (acting) and suffering (undergoing). (2011, 193)

Perhaps, like the artist who enters into the movement of nature in order to extend it, we could say that we enter into the spirit of the *logos* and language to both submit to it and so shift our self-understanding, and also to co-create it through our own unique and now more refined prejudices and viewpoints. My point is that Gadamer's conceptions may provide a helpful way of providing a discourse that supports the practice of living according to reason in a contemporary context.

As we pointed out in Chapter 3, training for death was an important philosophical practice in ancient thought. Hadot draws parallels between language and death and explains that "the Logos represents a demand for universal rationality, and presupposes a world of immutable norms, which are opposed to the perpetual state of becoming and changing appetites characteristic of individual, corporeal life" (1995, 93). In this respect, he notes that Socrates died following the *Logos*, risking death for virtue. This vision of objectivity is different from Gadamer's and the way that universals emerge in Gadamer's thought is instructive; as we have seen in Chapter 3, he draws upon a legal analogy, so that rather than following the law as something fully preformed, instead the law is concretely applied in each case. For Gadamer, "the meaning of any universal, of any norm, is only justified and determined in and through its concretization" (1983b, 82), which, if it we transfer this line of thought over towards considering reason would mean that reason is not something fully pre-formed or a type of pure reason or preformed *Logos*, but rather it is something that emerges through practice. For Gadamer, reason is a social phenomenon that emerges through its expressions, a viewpoint which may provide a helpful way of articulating how reason may be practiced in the present day.

In an essay where Hadot discusses living according to reason, he gives an account of what this would consist of for the ancient Stoics and provides three directions for practice as per Marcus Aurelius:

1 as an effort to practice objectivity in judgment;
2 as an effort to live according to justice, in the service of the human community; and
3 as an effort to become aware of our situation as a part of the universe. Such an exercise of wisdom will thus be an attempt to render oneself open to the universal. (1995, 212)

Point one is an approach to a lived logic, point two is a consideration of a lived ethics, and point three is that of a lived physics. Given that Hadot has indicated the importance of living according to reason for present-day concerns, the approach considered here will be to consider how this may translate over to a lived experience of logic, ethics, and physics in a contemporary context. Given our discussion above, I will suggest that Gadamer's hermeneutics provides a type of lived logic of dynamic emergence through social reason relevant for present-day use. We will now turn in the following section to consider lived physics and ethics in relation to the present-day context.

Physics, Ethics, Language and Metaphysics

When Hadot considers physics in relation to ancient thought he explains that a lived experience of physics consists of seeing things from beyond egoistic viewpoints and rather from "the perspective of the cosmos and of nature" (2011, 94). He later notes that a "lived physics also consists in becoming aware of the fact that we are part of the Whole, and must accept the necessary unfolding of this Whole with which we identify, because we are one of its parts" (2011, 95), and continues by remarking that "[i]t consists, finally, in contemplating the universe, in its splendor, recognizing the beauty of the most humble things" (2011, 95). As we saw in relation to Emerson's conceptions of intuitive insight and the experience of nature in Chapter 6 and 7, an experience of physics may help us overcome the distortions of our lived logic as we reorient to the greater whole of the cosmos and reason as it runs through reality. Structurally this runs close to Gadamer's conceptions of the relation between part and whole as it runs through language and tradition,

but instead of having the eternal cosmos shining forth in its beauty to help modify the vagaries of the human world, we now have exemplary artworks and texts to which we may orient ourselves, works which indicate the importance of holism, beauty and harmony and are renewed and maintained in the flow of tradition.

What I want to turn to now is a tension in the contemporary interpretation of Emerson. 'De-transcendentalist' readings tend to portray him as a non-metaphysical thinker of flux and movement, whereas more traditional interpretations of Emerson consider him to be a metaphysical thinker who incorporates notions of dynamic movement and creativity.

Poetic creation and creative emergence play an important role in Emerson's thought alongside what may be seen as more traditional metaphysical conceptions. Emerson has recently been interpreted in revisionary directions that emphasize the changeable and contingent aspects of his thought. For example, Branka Arsić (2010) writes, "I see Emerson's ontology as one of flux and understand being he describes to be in becoming, the over-soul as watery, the way of natural life as by abandonment, and the 'method of nature' as exaggeration and ecstasy" (2010, 9). Arsić develops a thoughtful articulation of Emerson amenable to contemporary use through emphasizing transition and flux. However, Emerson isn't only a philosopher of movement; for example, Russell Goodman notes that "Emerson is in many respects a *process* philosopher. But there is also a strong pull in his thought toward that which does not change, toward the Ideal" (2010, 46). For Emerson, abandonment to the impersonal is both a Being and a Becoming, where creative flux and becoming *and* a return to Being are important. This tension and how it may possibly be resolved is important to our discussion, as arguably revisionary readings of Emerson encourage his contemporary relevance by downplaying his metaphysical side. In this respect, is there a way to be both true to Emerson's metaphysics and the contemporary emphasis on creation and movement?

Given Emerson's well-known influence on Friedrich Nietzsche, an affinity to Nietzsche would be a promising place to start building a case for a de-transcendentalist reading of Emerson. However, Alan Levine maintains in respect to contemporary efforts to draw Emerson and Nietzsche together that "recent Emerson scholars cherry-pick the threads that they select from both Emerson and Nietzsche" (2014, 258). Malachuk (2014) contends that the influence of 'detranscendentlist' interpreters have led to a loss of focus on

important transcendental aspects of Emerson's thought in contemporary readings. Levine maintains that Emerson has been over-interpreted towards Montaigne and Nietzsche in ways that miss crucial elements of his transcendentalism and asks: "Is our rejection of metaphysics so complete that we do not want even to consider Emerson's ecstatic spirituality?" (2014, 259). One of the challenges in dealing with Emerson's thought in a contemporary context is the metaphysical aspects of it; simply put, Emerson holds that there are spiritual aspects of reality, a Higher Mind or Intellect which we participate in, which is part of the "infinitude of the private man" that is so important to Emerson's thought. Levine writes:

> One can ignore Emerson's metaphysical ground and focus only on his ontology, as the recent scholars do, and one would learn much about oneself. But Emerson's advice to individual selves cannot be divorced from the spiritual structure that he sees as underlying, supporting, and constraining the world. (2014, 234)

Spiritual structures do play a role in Emerson's thought and so too does his consideration of creative flux. For example, Arsić maintains that "[i]n questions of logic and the art of living, Emerson accepted many aspects of Stoic philosophy, but he refused Stoic Cosmology," and goes on to cite a journal passage that suggests the Stoic *plenum* or fullness works against Emerson's need for motion. She writes that "[t]he existence of a perfect cosmos wouldn't allow for excitements of existence (the beauty of falling, the art of drawing, the excitement of leaving). Motionlessness as effect of perfection would be devastating, in that it would bring about the emptiness of perfection" (2010, 171). Here, I think she is picking up on an important aspect of Emerson's thought. Given that Emerson points to both metaphysical structures and movement, what are we to do with this dilemma? One way of approaching this is consider that when Emerson writes of permanence and the eternal, he does not only mean structure. For example, Robinson discusses permanence in relation to the moral for Emerson and writes that "[t]o imagine the moral sense as a form of continuing energy, like fire, gives a better sense of Emerson's conception of its permanence – not a static permanence, but an unending source of power" (2008, 148). This of course is very helpful for concerns about metaphysical permanence; however, what I specifically want to imply is that there still seems to be some kind of spiritual structures within Emerson's thought,

structures that seemingly would run afoul of Heidegger's concerns over the "metaphysics of presence".

Now let us look at an instance where Emerson focusses on becoming. For example, in part of a journal passage from March 26, 1938, Emerson points to Becoming as something that surpasses Being:

> We must not affect as all mankind do, to know all things & to have quite finished & done God & Heaven. We must come back to our real initial state & see & own that we have yet beheld but the first ray of Being. In strict speech it seems fittest to say, *I Become* rather than *I am*. I am a *Becoming*. (1982, 184)

This points to not only mirroring reality, but to the possibility of creating and evolving alongside it and it through us. However, I would not take this to reject metaphysics or cosmology, but rather to point to the importance of movement and becoming as a part of metaphysics. As Urbas remarks in respect the importance of movement within Emerson's metaphysics, there are "[n]o false problems of 'fixtures' […], but rather a permanent foundation for selfhood and an ever-present source of power and movement. In Emerson the metaphysical ground is not synonymous with fixity" (2010, 5). I would suggest that once we appreciate that metaphysics may not be something static for Emerson, it may help open the possibility for a revitalized understanding of metaphysics. When Emerson, at the end of his essay "Intellect," refers to thinkers including Plato and Plotinus as "[t]his band of grandees" and goes on to say that they have "somewhat so vast in their logic, something so primary in their thinking, that it seems antecedent to all the ordinary distinctions of rhetoric and literature, and to be at once poetry, and music, and dancing, and astronomy, and mathematics. I am present at the sowing of the seeds of the world" (1983, 428), this would seem to point to a very open and flowing conception of metaphysics, which "dances," and is poetic. As Urbas points out, for Emerson causal law incorporates both permanence and change (2016, 199) and he remarks that "[t]he union of permanence and progress is what characterizes the divine" (2016, 200). Once we recognize the importance of flux and movement for Emerson, perhaps we don't have to contrast movement with metaphysics or cosmology, but rather consider a metaphysics that may be moving, providing both pre-existing structures to be emulated and have an openness to creative contribution.

Urbas writes that "[i]n metaphor- or language-driven accounts, the Emerson essay is all too often treated as a virtuoso anti-metaphysical performance in which momentary expressions of skepticism, perplexity, or ambivalence fatally undermine any principle of permanence" (2016, xxix). Nevertheless, what I want to explore is whether metaphysical and linguistic approaches could be seen as complementary in some ways, particularly once metaphysics is associated with movement. This is important for relating Gadamer's and Emerson's thought. As we saw in Chapter 7, language has taken on the role of God within contemporary thought and seems to serve a similar role as God or a Divine Mind in classical metaphysics by beings a medium of transcendence. Gadamer (2008) explicitly points to how a Divine Mind overcame subject/object dualism in classical metaphysics and claims that this is achieved in his own hermeneutics through language. Given that language is something that we all contribute to and can evolve, this approach provides a way of conceiving transcendence that is dynamic and emergent. Arsić relates Emerson's notion of the impersonal to language and writes that "it is language itself that constructs and speaks us," and notes that it is only in the absence of the I that "'accurate' expression occurs". She also remarks that "[t]his is precisely a modern, twentieth century idea, that language is the enormous power of impersonal speaking, a being outside the mind"[200] (2010, 165). I think it could also be said that Emerson's notion of the impersonal is a classical metaphysical idea derived from Platonism and Neo-Platonism but with more emphasis on creative flux and immanence.[201] A working hypothesis is that, at least from a certain angle, linguistic and metaphysical conceptions may have important commonalities once we move past some of the differences in discourse, which in terms of our reading of Emerson and Gadamer brings them closer together.

Emerson deploys a variety of master terms such as the One, Soul, Intellect and Over-soul to indicate a wiser aspect of ourselves and reality that we are immersed in yet do fully realize; rather, we tend to go about our business following our habits and conforming to limiting customs. That is why, as we saw in Chapter 2, Emerson encourages self-reliance, to break away from false modes of living and reconnect to the light and spiritual

[200] This connection points to the proximity of Gadamer's and Emerson's positions.

[201] One could conceive Gadamer's hermeneutics similarly as it runs through the influence of Hegel and Heidegger.

power that he believes we all have within. Put metaphysically, when we are not united with the soul or Over-soul, we experience a fragmented and distorted world; if are open to the soul, we will experience a more harmonious world. For Emerson, as we saw in Chapter 4, like is known by like and if we carry high and noble thoughts we will experience high and noble things. In order to experience heightened insights, in Emerson's view we need to move past our discursive understanding as it may lock us into habitual and limiting modes of thought. One way of conceiving moving past these limitations is metaphysically; when we reconnect with our soul, Intellect, or the One, we transcend our habitual self and experience a greater whole. However, as we have also indicated, language can serve a similar role; when we speak we transcend ourselves. As we considered in Chapter 4, Cavell writes of "the vision of *every word* in our—in human—language as requiring attention, as though language as such has fallen from or may aspire to a higher state […] in which the world is more perfectly expressed" (2003, 114). He associates this conception with Thoreau and Emerson and I would understand this as pointing to the possibility of redemptive and reinvigorated experiences of language in contrast to how we habitually speak. Greenham states that "[a]ccording to Emerson's theory of language the 'me' and the 'not-me', self and nature, are unified when just the right word is chosen" (2012, 156), which points to the possibility of transcendence to a greater whole through our experience of language. Likewise, when just the right thought or intuitive reason strikes us, for Emerson we experience a metaphysical unity. My point here is a simple one: language and metaphysics can both incorporate notions of unity, movement, harmony, and transcendence.

The use of language provides a helpful way for envisaging a linguistic account mediating an experience of nature as well as a lived physics in a contemporary context. Such an emphasis on poetic language and expression clearly finds resonance with Gadamer's viewpoints. As we discussed in Chapter 4, according to Gadamer when we find the right word we are at home and there "is a guarantee in what they [words] say to us" (2007, 107), and he particularly points to poetic language in this respect. In relation to this, we may recall part of a quote from Gadamer cited in Chapter 7: "The structure of the poem, which thus becomes language, guarantees the process of soul and world addressing each other as something finite" (2008, 79). That is, when we find the right word, there is a connection between word and

thing, an event of truth and heightened unity that occurs within linguistic experience. However, given that there is a stronger focus on nature within Emerson's thought this may help orient Gadamer's viewpoint towards incorporating nature. Nevertheless, Emerson's considerations of language are hardly systematic or complete, and Gadamer's conception of language provides a framework that could be drawn upon to further articulate and develop Emersonian-inspired linguistic views. For example, Gadamer's emphasis on performance and presentation emphasizes the immanence of linguistic meaning, and the way he provides a speculative theory of language which promotes a relation to a greater whole in a dynamic and emergent way could be drawn upon to support and develop relational perspectives that Emerson often couches in terms of metaphysics. Learning to use language more poetically and flexibly may be seen as a philosophical practice for both Gadamer and Emerson. Greenham writes that:

> Nature is not just something that is sensed, it is something that allows humans to express themselves. It should be clear that this derives from Emerson's post-Fichtean understanding of the me and the not-me and his corresponding redefinition of spirit as that which circulates through God, nature and man. In this context spirit is nature turning into language and as such allowing the subject to find itself though objects. It is the natural world which allows the mind to name its own states […]. He seeks a poetic unity with nature—resisting empiricist claims that sensation is all—and he finds this unity in language, and in particular in language's metaphorical qualities. (2012, 105)

Within this conception, the unity that bridges man and nature and me and not-me is through language rather than Mind, a conception that has commonalities to Gadamer's position. Greenham notes the transition that Emerson's thought makes from a Deist position towards the human mind and develops how this unity is experienced through language. He points to how the expression of poetic language inspired by the experience of nature may help measure our own distance from our own immanent potential. Put another way, an experience of nature reflects itself in how we use language, which can be contrasted with how we ordinarily use language in our daily life and this gap can awaken us to the need to revise our habitual ways.

A journal entry reflects a profound experience of interconnection to nature Emerson experienced in the *Jardin des Plantes* in Paris:

> You are impressed with the inexhaustible gigantic riches of nature. The Universe is a more amazing puzzle than ever, as you look along this bewildering series of animated forms,—the hazy butterflies, the carved shells, the birds, beasts, fishes, insects, snakes,—& the upheaving principle of life everywhere incipient in the very rock aping organized forms. Not a form so grotesque, so savage, nor so beautiful but is an expression of some property inherent in man the observer,—an occult relation between the very scorpions and man. I feel the centipede in me—cayman, carp, eagle, and fox. I am moved by strange sympathies, I say continually, "I will be a naturalist." (*JMN4*, 199)

Here, nature in its expression finds a commonality with something in man and there are "strange sympathies" that may be found between humankind and nature. This is why for Emerson we may experience nature 'outside us' and learn something about ourselves and so learn of a sympathy that overcomes the subject/object dualism of outside and inside to some extent, which blurs the lines between a lived logic and physics. Gadamer's connection between word and thing, arguably a highly ambiguous aspect of his thought, also seems to rely on 'strange sympathies,' rhythmic relations between *logos* and physics, language and thing (see Chapter 7). The creative expression of language may help take up whatever it is we experience within nature and through its expression evolve not only our understanding and experience of nature, but through this possibly nature itself. In this way, unlike within ancient thought, we are not only guided by nature, but may creatively extend nature. In this respect, the transcendence experienced through the lived logic of language or tradition takes on a similar structural form of the transcendence of a lived physics of natural forms once we recognize the possibility of creative contribution.

The creative use of language can also open up new possibilities for experience. Emerson writes in "the Poet": "Every word was once a poem. Every new relation is a new word" (1983, 455). As we have seen in Chapter 5, metaphorical creation encourages new and previously unthought connections which open up possibilities for new experience, helping break past discursive limitation. If we jump back into a more metaphysical viewpoint, we could say that metaphor and the creative use of language could help reorient us back to the axis of things, how things are, or Being; put Platonically, the permanent Forms of reality. However, this is a too simplistic and stationary reading of Emerson's metaphysics, for, as we have discussed previously, there is an important role for Becoming and

movement. For Emerson, part our potential is as co-creators in the ongoing process of creation. Seen in this light, the creative use of language and metaphysics need not be inimical to one another, but could be seen as complementary in certain ways, implying that the metaphorical use of language is one of our creative potentials. Greenham, considering a passage from Emerson's journal, explains that "[t]he miracle of poetry […] is movement — 'transit' — from the whole ('the Vast') 'to the particular' and back again in a constantly evolving spiral. This movement, Emerson states, is the universal name 'God'. It is *movement* that is truth; it is *movement* that is beauty: the ceaseless movement of the whole in each of its particulars" (2016b, 112). This vision of poetic language incorporates beauty and movement and the experience of a greater whole which Emerson calls 'God'. Likewise, intuitive or metaphysical insight could serve a similar role. As we have cited in Chapter 2, Emerson writes in his essay "Circles" that "[t]he life of man is a self-evolving circle, which, from a ring imperceptibly small, rushes on all sides outwards to new and larger circles, and that without end" (1983, 404). This suggests a series of expansions where the self is redefined in a greater whole, where perspectives beyond the self are integrated into a new self, an ongoing process. However, even in this essay that focusses on movement, Emerson writes: "Yet this incessant movement and progression which all things partake could never become sensible to us but by contrast to some principle of fixture or stability in the soul. Whilst the eternal generation of circles proceeds, the eternal generator abides" (1983, 412). I also think that permanence in a certain light can be beautiful and 'Godlike' if you will; perhaps not the rigid stability of an abstract metaphysics, but a type of stability formed by something that is beautiful and good. Such a stability could be envisaged linguistically as well; for example, the word 'friend,' although it may certainly be used with some flexibility, presumably has some type of permanence in respect to implying some form of mutual respect and care. Likewise, as we saw in Chapter 3, when Gadamer points to eminent texts that stand the test of time, this is a form of stability maintained by our tradition and given his emphasis on the beautiful and good, we find a crucial affinity to Emerson and classical Greek thought.

Another way of looking at this is that linguistic accounts help bring out certain aspects of Emerson's thought and metaphysical accounts help bring out others. As cited in Chapter 5, in his chapter on Plato in *Representative Men*, Emerson explains that "[t]hought seeks to know unity in unity; poetry

to show it by variety; that is, always by an object or symbol" (1983, 642). This remark indicates that thought and mind, which I would associate with metaphysics, tends to point to unities, whereas poetry, which obviously is linked to language, tends to emphasize the particular. When Emerson goes on to say that "Plato keeps the two vases, one of æther and one of pigment, at his side, and invariably uses both" (1983, 641), I think the same could be said of Emerson himself, and that more metaphysical readings of him pick up on emphasizing unity whereas linguistic readings pick up on emphasizing variety. However, this having been said, the way that Gadamer approaches language with his emphasis on holism provides an emphasis on relationality through language. For example, when he writes, as part of a longer passage cited previously in Chapter 7, that "every word breaks forth as if from a center and is related to a whole" (2004, 474), this points to the possibility of relation to a greater whole. This occurs when we break past representational thought (for Emerson the understanding) and the propositional use of language towards more relational viewpoints, of which poetic language is the eminent example for Gadamer (for Emerson intuitive metaphysical experience which he calls reason and poetic language are both important vehicles for relational experience). Both thinkers provide us with practical approaches for experiencing universality and wholeness and attempt to reconcile the tension between unity and variety.

For Emerson what matters is active creation and practical self-realization. If metaphorical and poetic language and metaphysics are both approaches that have the potential to encourage more creative thought and action, in the end does it matter if this is fostered by linguistic explanations or metaphysical ones? For example, as we saw in Chapter 4, Cavell thinks that it is an unawareness of how we use language which constrains us. There we explored how Cavell considers Emerson's claim, as cited in Chapter 4, that "Intellect annuls Fate. So far as man thinks, he is free," and relates this to a struggle with the language we use (2003, 72). As I concluded in Chapter 4, I think Cavell's approach can be seen as a very helpful formulation to create a space for freedom that cultivates a greater awareness of the language we use. However, we could also conceive Emerson's passage as relating to the experience of Intellect or how metaphysically based intuitive insight may permeate our restrictive thoughts and situations and also help open the way to freedom. Whereas Cavell emphasizes an abandonment that occurs in the process of writing, put metaphysically, we could say that we abandon

ourselves to the Intellect or Over-soul to transcend our previous limitations. Again, I believe it could be argued that both conceptions work in similar directions, and once we realize that not only language can move and evolve, but so too may metaphysics for Emerson, these positions become closer. However, unlike Cavell who emphasizes Emersonian abandonment in writing I would propose that abandonment of the habitual also leads to a homecoming or 'dwelling' in the Over-soul, a tapping into our potential infinitude. Still, such intuitive experience may certainly manifest themselves creatively as writing, among other things. Now, Urbas maintains: "In Emerson, figural language does not go 'all the way down. It borrows its power from the source of *all* power—the causal order of the world" (2016, xix). Nevertheless, language plays an important role in Emerson's thought, such as in poetic expression. In my view, even if language does not go 'all the way down,' if an Emersonian position involves participating in the causal order of the world via our Mind, language still plays an important expressive role in this respect. My point is that in a certain light metaphysics and linguistic viewpoints may be complementary, whether language is seemingly ubiquitous and the "universal medium" as with Gadamer or just an important aspect of human experience, as with Emerson's thought.

My point in these considerations is not cover over differences between linguistic and metaphysical perspectives, which certainly do exist. Rather, it is to suggest that in a certain light when we consider creative transcendence, language and metaphysics may have more in common than at first glance. Whether we are choosing the right word or tapping into the right intuition or thought, these viewpoints prompt reflection on how we think and talk and how these may extend into action. Given the important notions of harmony and goodness in Emerson's thought, metaphysics may more adequately capture this side of Emerson's thinking and, in fact, may give a better explanation in respect to why beauty, order, and harmony are important than Gadamer's linguistic emphasis may provide.[202] Given the importance of movement in Emerson's thought, language may be more suitable here, whether this is through thinkers giving linguistic accounts of Emerson's thought or the way Gadamer develops his linguistic viewpoints. However,

[202] Given how Gadamer backs away from the metaphysics of the metaphysical theories he draws upon, it's a reasonable question as to whether he can justify maintaining an emphasis on order, beauty and harmony linguistically or through tradition.

given the possibility that for Emerson metaphysics could include movement, and that there is no inherent reason why a conception of language could not incorporate viewpoints of harmony, beauty and goodness which comes forth when the right word is chosen (which in fact Gadamer's conception of language provides), these positions may be seen as complementary. In my view, both linguistic and metaphysical approaches have the potential for providing alternative ways of conceiving an Emersonian and Gadamerian inspired spirituality relevant to our times and for people of different tastes; for example, the linguistic for those of a more secular and aesthetic bent, the metaphysical for those of more religious and metaphysical leanings.

In terms of a contemporary recovery of beauty and goodness, which we can conceive of as a lived approach to ethics, in my view Emerson and Gadamer affirm beauty and goodness in dynamic and creative ways. As we have seen, both Emerson and Gadamer have been interpreted in a variety of directions, from the more metaphysical to the more post-modern. This may speak to the productive ambiguity of their thought, which opens it to a wide range of potential application, and the inherent 'rhetorical genius' of both our thinkers to communicate their viewpoints in creative ways to different audiences. Charles Taylor characterizes Emerson as a thinker who "hovered on the borders where theism, pantheism, and non-theism all meet" (1989, 408), and when we consider how Gadamer draws upon metaphysical theories and drops away from their metaphysical implications, points to a quasi-religious role for aesthetics, his interest to theologians, and the crucial role for unity and wholeness in his thought, we might say that his hermeneutics also exists on these borders. This is a productive ambiguity, one which allows both of our thinkers to bring out what in my view could be seen as spiritual viewpoints divorced from dogmatic religious and metaphysical assumptions. This potentially points to a broad conception of philosophy intertwined with aesthetics that could serve an important contemporary role of an approach that encourages our philosophical and spiritual potential.

For Emerson, there is a positive moral order running through reality with reference to which we can orient our lives. Although Gadamer does not hold a metaphysical position of this mould, he does maintain the importance of beauty, order, harmony and the good and recognizing our interconnections with others. Although his focus is not strongly on ethics per se, his emphasis on respecting for the other and following the subject matter would seemingly have important ethical implications; as we saw in Chapter 2, his thinking

involves an encouragement to move from more manipulative towards more respectful viewpoints.[203]

In Emerson's view, ethics relates to physics. Emerson writes in his essay "Compensation" that "the universe is alive. All thing are moral. That soul, which within us is a sentiment, outside of us is a law" (1983, 289). For Emerson, when we experience the moral within ourselves he calls this the moral sentiment, whereas when we experience the moral outside of us it is moral law. The personal experience of the moral isn't a matter of a subjectivism for Emerson; as Urbas explains in respect to universality more generally: "For Emerson, universal ends are not formulated by an isolated, sovereign subject, in the exercise of its noumenal freedom; they are an integral part of nature" (2010, 8). However, this does not mean that nature or Mind is rigid and unchanging, nor that we do not make a potential creative contribution toward universal ends. Greenham (2012) points to the link between moral imagination and reason for Emerson, which as he puts it, rather than being allied with philosophical systems is more akin to poetry.[204] Greenham's interpretation of Emerson emphasizes linguistic expression, and here the moral sentiment could be seen as evolving through our use of language, a viewpoint that would find resonance with Gadamer's evolutionary notions of language and tradition. Although I would be reluctant to push the evolutionary nature of the moral sentiment and law too far with Emerson given the emphasis he puts on the moral law in places, the general spirit of Emersonian thought is not one of dogmatic subordination

[203] See Vilhauer (2010) for a consideration of the role of ethics in Gadamer's thought.

[204] Greenham, considering a passage from Emerson's journal in which Emerson writes of his strong imagination and enjoyment of poetry, his admission of a weak reasoning faculty, and his choice to focus on the 'debatable ground' of theology, and in which he points to the highest form of reason relating to the moral imagination, writes that "[p]oetry eclipses philosophy in Emerson's thought; this is one of the things that make it emphatically romantic" (2012, xi). Greenham points to how Emerson's differing use of the word reasoning "is suggestive of why he will be so drawn to European Romantic ideas". He goes on to write: "In the first instance, where Emerson disdains his 'reasoning faculty', he is referring to the style and method of systematic philosophy embodied in the works of the British philosophers John Locke, Samuel Clarke and David Hume. These 'reasoning machines' he finds himself unable to emulate. In the second instance, 'reasoning upon divine subjects', the word is associate with the 'moral imagination', which in contrast to system is allied with poetry, a creative response to the constantly 'debatable'—because always open—'Ground' of theology. This is poetic reasoning, and it here that Emerson locates his own strengths" (2012, xi).

but rather based on acceptance of the experience of truth. Put another way, if there are unchanging moral laws these would be something that given enough insight we would agree with from a position of freedom, and I leave it as an open question how much creative impetus we may interpret in Emerson thought with respect to moral laws. However, I believe it could be argued that given the type of creative flux Emerson indicates in respect to poetry, this could extended to Emerson's moral viewpoints in some way.[205] As we considered in Chapter 4, my effort to think through the type of dynamic movement that is more readily found in Emerson's poetic thought in relation to his metaphysics is an interpretation that attempts to play out these tensions in his thought. Depending on which aspects of Emerson's thought interpretive emphasis may be given to, this attempt could also rather be seen as an application in Gadamer's sense of the term, an interpretation that attempts to stays true to the subject matter but also creatively extends it in some way. However, as stated in Chapter 4, I believe my interpretive effort is well within the bounds of reasonable interpretation, but I again bring this up because of Hadot's emphasis on objective interpretation and Gadamer's understanding of application and the grey area that exists between these two approaches to interpretation.

Linguistic viewpoints may help foster truth and insight in a less exotic manner than metaphysics, letting poetic insight serves as a proxy for metaphysical truth.[206] When in his essay "Friendship" Emerson writes that "[w]e have a great deal more kindness than is ever spoken" (1983, 341), this

[205] If we attempt to think this through metaphysically within the framework considered in Chapter 4, whether in respect to morality or more generally in respect to metaphysics, this could be seen as a very modest form of creative freedom at the point where the Intellect or the structure of Reality emerges out of the One. However, the overall impetus in Emerson's moral thought is to follow moral sentiment and law (and the term 'sentiment' would seemingly imply some flexibility). In respect to how morality may be considered in a contemporary context, I believe some element of flux and movement would be helpful. In my view, there is no inherent reason why a moral 'law' could not be absolute in the sense of being true, yet also could be subject to revision and improvement (and become 'more true' if you will, in a way that is more creative than just following a predetermined teleology). Gadamer's sense of evolving universals and his legal analogy could be a very helpful model to creatively draw upon to consider how flux and movement could play itself out metaphysically with respect to morals and more generally, as will our discussion of expressionistic viewpoints, which we will consider below.

[206] As we have discussed, those of a more secular and aesthetic taste may prefer this articulation.

is akin to the possibility of the unsaid in Gadamer's thought, a linguistic relation to a greater whole. When Emerson goes on to remark that "[m]augre all the selfishness that chills like east winds the world, the whole human family is bathed with an element of love like fine ether" (1983, 341), this emphasizes building more harmonious and beautiful relations and could be seen as akin to tapping into the potential and immanent experience of community. Whether we might conceive this as, for example, an experience of the Over-soul or linguistically, such are alternative discourses which may appeal to people of different tastes, but both viewpoints point to the possibility of more harmonious communities. Although Emerson's ethics focusses on self-development and realization, this process has positive implications for the community at large and the individual is opened up to more relational viewpoints. Gadamer starts from an emphasis on human community, which I would suggest has positive implications for the individual. As has so often been the case in the course of our reflections on Gadamer and Emerson, each of their viewpoints has the potential to balance the other.

As we have seen, for Gadamer language rhythmically resonates with things (and how closely this may relate to the Emerson's participatory experience of the "axis of things" is something to ponder upon). Although for Gadamer this may not take the traditional form of order and cosmic harmony as found in Greek thought, he is clearly inspired by such accounts, and an important aspect of his aesthetics is that art testifies to a harmonious order. Although Emerson's and Gadamer's theoretical justification for such positions are different, in practice, they both point in varying degrees to the type of harmony, order and goodness found in Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics, and Neo-Platonism, and both of our thinkers may be seen as torch-bearers for this stream of Western thought in a modern context. In my view, Gadamer and Emerson provide two helpful discourses that may help account and "clothe" practices of universality and transcendence in a contemporary context.

Expression and Universality

Both Gadamer and Emerson may be seen as expressionistic thinkers. Richardson points to the dynamic aspect of expression for Emerson: "Perhaps 'expressing' would be a better choice of words [as opposed to

expression], for Emerson points out that the essential thing about poetry is the process not the product" (2009, 72). Let us consider Charles Taylor's description of the process of expression:

> To express something is to make it manifest in a given medium. I express my feelings in my face; I express my thoughts in the words I speak or write […] In all these cases, we have the notion of making something manifest, and in each case in a medium with certain specific properties.
>
> But to talk of 'making manifest' doesn't imply that what is so revealed was already fully formulated beforehand. Sometimes that can be the case, as when I finally reveal my feelings that I had already put in words for myself long ago. But in the case of the novel or play, the expression will also involve a formulation of what I have to say.[207] (1989, 374)

In respect to Emerson's thought, we might say that for Emerson we can both look to whatever ideal structures there are, not only to copy them, but also creatively express and co-create with them. In this respect, our exploration in Chapter 4 and 6 of both the receptive and creative aspect of Emerson's thought would seem to find parallels with both the role of receptivity and the creative role of expression. In this light, let us also consider part of passage from Gadamer that was cited in Chapter 6 that relates to the emergence of the "divine" in a work of art:

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[207] This explanation of expression relates to specific aspects of expression that Taylor notes that he wants to focus on with his term "expressivism" (1989, 374); see Taylor (1975) where he develops his conception of "expressivism". Gadamer's thought has been linked to expressivistic viewpoints. For example, Wachterhauser writes: "To better understand what Gadamer means by 'application,' "temporalization," or "increase in being" it is helpful, in my opinion, to turn to an important trend in modern culture, which Charles Taylor has called 'expressivism.' In my opinion Gadamer shares a great deal with this 'expressivist' tradition and in this respect he can be seen as a representative of the 'Romantic' tradition, despite the fact that Gadamer would probably not identify himself in these terms. I would argue that these Romantic elements in Gadamer's philosophy are very much a part of his *wirkungsgeschichtliche Bewussstsein* or 'historically affected consciousness'" (1999, 143). As we noted previously, Emerson too was strongly influenced by Romantic conceptions. Vessey (2011) relates Gadamer's viewpoints to expressivist theories of language and refers to Taylor's "expressivism," but emphasizes that linguistic understanding is a shared process that reveals a world. Vessey points to Gadamer's expressivism, but also considers Gadamer's emphasis on openness and a relation to others and tradition to present Gadamer's position, which includes an emphasis on following the subject matter and its expression within inter-subjective dialogue (2011, 103-105). Emerson also emphasizes a relation to a greater whole, although more metaphysically inspired.

> What has come forth is something with which we agree, not because it is an exact copy of something but because as an image it has something like a superior reality. It may perhaps also be a copy of something, but it does not need to have anything about it that is like a copy. In thinking of it one thinks of what, for example, the mystery cults protected as a holy secret. (2007, 213)

We may note here that Gadamer does not completely discount that something could be a copy, but rather emphasizes the productive and emergent. It needs be recalled that Gadamer's hermeneutic approach is ontological, relating to what dynamically emerges as a linguistic event rather than revealing a pre-existing structure *per se*. As Davey indicates, "[t]he speculative insight, whether achieved through the languages of art or philosophy, does not discover a preexistent whole but, rather, makes whole" (2006, 124). Nevertheless, whatever structures that emerge would seemingly relate to the subject matter which also seemingly would relate to whatever structures there may be in reality.[208] Put another way, we might say that not only do we need to creatively work to make things whole, but something in reality may help make us whole. What this points to, in my view, is that the process of linguistic expression both takes up pre-existing possibilities and dynamic contributes to the result.

There is a productive aspect to the process of expression; as Taylor explains, "for [the] expressive object, we think of its 'creation' as not only a making manifest but also a making, a bringing of something to be. This notion of expression is itself modern" (1989, 374).[209] In this respect, it could be said that Gadamer's conception of application is expressive, and so too is Gadamer's general emphasis on the importance of presentation and how meaning dynamically emerges in our historical moment. If we were to consider this metaphysically, we might say the structures of reality are potentials waiting for development and as they enter the subject matter of conversations they contribute to our expressions rather than something eternal and static which we may merely hope to copy at best. As we pointed

[208] We should recall the connection between word and thing for Gadamer discussed in Chapter 7.

[209] Taylor points to the continuing relevance of the Romantic conceptions of the imagination: "The idea of the creative imagination, as it sprang up in the Romantic era, is still central to modern culture. The conception is still alive among us of art—of literature, in the first place, and especially of poetry—as a creation which reveals, or as a revelation which at the same time defines and completes what it makes manifest" (1989, 419).

to in Chapter 4, this approach finds some parallels with Emerson's understanding of a receptive and constructive intellect.

Let us take this model and consider how it may relate to conceiving universality in relation to philosophy as a way of life in a contemporary context. As has already been noted in Chapter 3 and 6, objectivity and *theoria* conceived as spectating preformed universals that override subjectivity may be problematic in a contemporary context. In this respect, many of the examples that Hadot gives in respect to universal or disinterested viewpoints seem to suggest pre-formed universals that are discovered.[210] For example, Hadot explains that "[t]he quest for self-realization, final goal of spiritual exercises, is well symbolized by the Plotinian image of sculpting one's own statue" (1995, 102). However, this isn't a matter of creativity, which becomes clear as Hadot continues: "It is often misunderstood, since people imagine that this expression corresponds to a kind of moral aestheticism. On this interpretation, its meaning would be to adopt a pose, to select an attitude, or to fabricate a personality for oneself" (1995, 102).[211] He goes on to write: "In fact, it is nothing of the sort. For the ancients, sculpture was an art which 'took away,' as opposed to painting, an art which 'added on'. The statue pre-existed in the marble block, and it was enough to take away what was superfluous in order to cause it to appear" (1995, 102). For Foucault, an "aesthetics of existence" or "care of self" was not a matter of uncovering something true, but rather a form of self-creation. Here we have two philosophical viewpoints; Hadot's is more classical and ancient, a mimetic conception of reality; Foucault's is more contemporary and inventive.

As we discussed in Chapter 1, Hadot feels that Foucault did not focus enough on the experience of universality with his approach and he mentions that he understands why Foucault avoids emphasizing these universal aspects, as they may not be so amenable for contemporary usage, and so bracketed them. However, this bracketing may lead to a reading of ancient

[210] In M. H. Abrams' (1971) work *The Mirror and the Lamp*, he contrasts differing metaphors in aesthetic theory, the mirror as a mimetic copying which he relates to Plato and the evolution in Romanticism towards a lamp which is expressive and creative. Hadot emphasizes what could seemingly be characterized as mimetic conceptions of universals, whereas Gadamer and Emerson bring out mimetic and more expressive and creative modern viewpoints.

[211] Presumably Hadot has Foucault in mind.

thought that seemingly misses important aspects of it; as Arnold Davidson asserts in respect to Foucault's interpretation of ancient texts in relation to the present, that this

> need not, and should not, lead us to transform the ancient intensification of the relation to the self into the modern estheticizating of the self. The ancient experience of the self ought to retain its distinctiveness, not simply for reasons of historical accuracy but especially if it is to provide a philosophical standpoint from which we can begin to learn to think differently. (2005b, 126)

Thus, Foucault would seem to have over-read ancient thought in a more aesthetic direction of self-creation; nevertheless, whatever else we may think of his attempt, in doing so Foucault would seem to have avoided the issue of universal reason not having much current meaning. Hadot clearly feels universality is important in a contemporary context and as we have seen he takes a performative approach of cutting away the problematic ancient discourse from philosophical practices. In this respect, if universality is important to contemporary application, as Hadot clearly thinks it is, and if freedom and creativity are important aspects of modern thought, it may be important to further consider whether there are ways to understand universals that do not fall into a theory of objective externals, nor swing too far the other way and fall into relativism or subjectivism. Posed in this way, this is the prime impetus of Gadamer's thought; that is, he considers a productive role for human prejudices and our historical nature but also relates these to universality, and his hermeneutic approach is a subtle balance of considering universality with a creative element. This creative element may be an important aspect of philosophy as a way of life is in a contemporary context, a distinctly 'modern' element to consider in relation to ancient philosophical perspectives that emphasize mimesis (it should be recalled that Gadamer's conception of mimesis is creative).

Now, as we saw in Chapter 7, Hadot draws upon contemporary aesthetic approaches as a modern way to experience cosmic consciousness and the world *qua* world, and it should be noted that many of the writers and artists he points to such as Klee, Cezanne, Merleau-Ponty, and Bergson may all be characterized as either being expressionists or having strong expressionistic aspects to their thought. Nevertheless, in the essay itself, Hadot often seems to sway between participatory accounts and disinterested perspectives, and I think it would be helpful to bring the creative aspects of such participation

further to the fore. For example, when Hadot writes that "man *lives in* the world without *perceiving* the world," he continues by noting that "Bergson correctly grasped the reason for this situation, when he distinguished between habitual, utilitarian perception, necessary for life, and the detached, disinterested perception of the artist or the philosopher" (1995, 258). However, there are also crucial creative components to Bergson's thought, which Hadot elsewhere points to when he is considering the process of transforming perception to look at the world anew, which involves

> detaching oneself from the artificial, from the habitual, the conventional, and returning basically to what might be called an elementary perception, disengaged from all prejudice. One might say that this effort, analogous to that of the painter, is a spiritual exercise. In Bergson, this new perception consists in a vision of reality as becoming, evolving, as the surging forth of an unpredictable novelty—a world not already made, but making itself. (2011, 126)

We can see commonalities with Gadamer and Emerson here and that this process of transforming perception is a type of dynamic participation which, as we have seen in Chapter 7, Hadot himself is clearly well-versed in. In *The Veil of Isis,* when considering Goethe's perspectives in relation to the unveiling of Isis or nature, Hadot writes "Nature is alive and moving, not an immobile statue" (2006, 252). What is somewhat surprising is that he hasn't transferred aspects of this viewpoint over to his criticisms of Foucault to present a more dynamic vision of universality. In this respect, Gadamer's thought provides a helpful approach to envisaging how universals are dynamic and evolving, and I believe Emerson does to some extent as well. It may help to provide an image or symbol for this process of movement and universality, and I suggest we draw upon Hadot's image of a statue and rather than seeing it as uncovering something preformed as per his understanding of ancient thought or seeing it as something entirely self-created, supersede this dichotomy by rather seeing this as a sculpting that has a certain structure and potential which is also creatively uncovered, developed, and newly created, a dynamic process of emergence. That is, we could have an image of an evolving, flowing, and moving 'statue' or even watery forms that may arise and fall away, to emphasize their mobile aspects, a type of "fusion of horizons" between ancient and modern perspectives.

In respect to Hadot's criticisms of Foucault's perspective, as we pointed to in Chapter 1, Wimberley defends Foucault's aesthetics of existence against Hadot's charges of Dandyism, and he also explores the differences between norms and normalization in respect to Foucault's concerns with normalization and domination. Wimberley explains:

> Domination is the state of inflexibility where the power relations that define and surrounding subjects become calcified and resistant to transformation. Domination results in subjects becoming enmeshed in immobile relations of power that not only define subjects' worlds but leave them stuck with a fixed set of influences that create and shape the subjects themselves. (2009, 197)

In this respect, the difference between normalization and norms takes shape: "norms alone do not necessarily result in domination while normalization does tend toward it" (2009, 197). Norms point towards specific and positively stated goals and there is some flexibility in their application.

When we consider Emerson's strong critique of custom, this can be seen as attacking forms of normalization. The way that Gadamer draws upon tradition in a fluid and evolving way may be understood as looking to tradition for norms to help orient our lives, which, as per his notion of application, is a creative endeavor. In respect to our considerations of universality, Gadamer and Emerson each provide ways to orient ourselves that have some consideration for the perspectival and our concrete situation. They both offer paradigms of relating part and whole that supersede strong binary readings between post-modern viewpoints that emphasize plurality and freedom and ancient philosophy that emphasizes universal perspectives and stability. The above discussion of norms notwithstanding, the impetus of Foucault's thought is to emphasize self-creation and pluralism. In this sense, I would suggest that Gadamer and Emerson's thought may incorporate aspects of both Hadot's universality and Foucault's more fragmentary and pluralistic viewpoints. However, it is beyond the scope of this research to attempt an in-depth engagement with Foucault's thought; rather our focus is on considering how Hadot's emphasis on universality may be related to philosophy as a way of life in a contemporary context that considers plurality and dynamic emergence to a greater extent.

This is important; as we have mentioned previously in respect to Heidegger's influential metaphysics of presence argument, he argues to the

effect that for Plato Ideas and the Good are static presences that govern reality,[212] a perspective that has strongly influenced the Western metaphysical philosophical tradition and according to Heidegger has culminated in perspectives of technological mastery and control, truth as correctness and a forgetfulness of Being.[213]Against this tendency, Heidegger emphasizes the factical and historical, truth as concealing and revealing, and the importance of a formless conception of Being to help overcome what he sees as a problematic emphasis on Being as static presences. However, although Emerson in places certainly holds perspectives that point to metaphysical laws, wills and presences, there are also strong elements of creative power, dynamic possibility, freedom, and co-creation within this, and as such he may be at least somewhat 'immune' to aspects of Heidegger's metaphysical critique. The point I want to make is this: to the extent that continental philosophy follows Heidegger's concerns with a "metaphysics of presence" to the detriment and dismissal of metaphysics, it may potentially discount perspectives such as Emerson's that may point to and be further developed into a re-invigorated approach towards a more inspired metaphysics, what I will call the "metaphysics of possibility".[214] In this respect, I think it is possible to acknowledge the value of Heidegger's concern over metaphysical presences and the way such viewpoints may disparage the factical and experiences in time, but could it be that within the continental philosophical tradition that such a concern over metaphysical presences has passed beyond being a norm (e.g. a concern with metaphysics

[212] As was pointed to in Chapter 3, Irrera maintains that there are normative theories of objectivity underlying Hadot's universality, and he remarks: "This theorization introduces, […] a normative exteriority that rests on what Derrida would call the metaphysical thought of presence" (2010, 1014). Heidegger influenced Derrida's concern regarding the metaphysics of presence; for example, see Thorsteinsson (2015).

[213] Perhaps it could be said that, to draw upon Foucault's distinction between normalization and norms and extend this conception to metaphysics, that Heidegger may see metaphysical Forms as types of normalizations of thought (metaphysical reality that dictate to us) that distort our possibility of a lived relation to Being, whereas Emerson reads metaphysical Forms as norms to be creatively engaged and extended.

[214] Given the ambiguities and tensions in Emerson's thought in respect to permanence and creative flux, it is perhaps less a question of how far Emerson may be interpreted in this expressivistic direction than how we may be inspired by his position and potentially further emphasize creative flux in respect to metaphysics.

understood in an overly rigid way) towards a normalization or unthinking dogma (e.g. all metaphysics is inherently bad and naïve in some way)?

According to Heidegger, "[l]anguage *is the law-giving gathering and therefore the openness of the structure of beings*" (Heidegger 2010b, 91), and in this respect, a more dynamic and creative "language of metaphysics" through a perspective such as Emerson's may be an important resource not to be prematurely discounted.[215] If prior more metaphysical ages were in error in terms of being too focused on presences, perhaps we need to take care not to overemphasize the formless and contingent, or perhaps better yet, find a productive dialectic between these important perspectives.

As we have seen, Hadot points to the importance of universality in ancient thought and also finds this approach important in a contemporary context. Within a post-modern landscape such may be seen as naïve; nevertheless, as mentioned in Chapter 1, Wimberley (2009) makes the point that given that Hadot maintains that universals are important and that Foucault's utilizes his aesthetic approach to bring normalizations into question, if Foucault is correct Hadot's view may lead to false values and domination, whereas if Hadot is correct, by discounting universals this may lead to missing out on the order and harmony of the universal. If Hadot is right about universals he provides an important counterpoint to contemporary positions that reject universality. Gadamer's emphasis on human community and Emerson's emphasis on an interconnection with nature would seem to provide helpful accounts of transcendence and both

[215] In respect to Heidegger's interpretation of Plato, Gadamer remarks that "it is far from obvious that this is the only way to read Plato" (1994, 160). As we considered in Chapter 1, Gadamer elsewhere explains the stimulus he received from Heidegger which led him further into Plato and Hegel's dialectic, and that he spent years developing what he calls the "Platonic-Aristotelian unitary effect" of the good. He notes that in the background was the challenge of Heidegger's conception of metaphysical thought as a forgetfulness of being, and writes that "[m]y elaboration and projection of a philosophical hermeneutics in *Wahrheit und Methode* bear witness to my efforts to withstand this challenge theoretically," and, as we cited in Chapter 1, he remarks that he hopes that his book, *The Idea of the Good* will also "keep alive both Platonic dialogue and the speculative dimension common to Plato, Aristotle, and Hegel, as partners in the ongoing discussion which is philosophy" (1986c, 5). Gadamer took Heidegger's concerns seriously yet maintained the relevance of Plato and the Western metaphysical tradition more generally. I am suggesting that we can retrieve something of value from Emerson that is metaphysical in a stronger sense than Gadamer who draws upon metaphysical viewpoints and distances himself from them.

consider movement and flux and a relation to universality and a greater whole, possibly bridging the gap between what could be conceived as naïve and abstract metaphysics and relativism.

The conceptions of universality that Hadot emphasizes may be unnecessarily objectivistic in certain ways, and as we have seen Gadamer and Emerson offer more dynamic and creative accounts of universality. In this respect, we may have three 'menu options' of universality: the first being Hadot's account that emphasizes universality in line with ancient philosophical viewpoints; the second being Emerson's metaphysical account that relates to our infinitude and seemingly both incorporates conceptions of metaphysics and dynamic movement; the third being Gadamer's ontological and linguistic account of dynamic universals within language and tradition that emphasizes finitude (and linguistic and readings of revisionary readings of Emerson that emphasize movement and flux may be seen as allied in ways with Gadamer here). Although Hadot points to how there are no longer different philosophical schools as in ancient times for us moderns to choose from, in my view, here each of our thinkers provide different "existential options" and ways of conceiving universality that may appeal to different people. As was noted in Chapter 1, Wimberley (2009) points to how Hadot characterizes his philosophical differences with Foucault as one of taste and choice of life, and similarly, we could say that Hadot, Emerson and Gadamer may each appeal to different preferences, which could be characterized as such: Hadot to those inspired by conceptions of universality in line with ancient thought, Emerson perhaps to those who are inspired by conceptions inspired by ancient thought and accounts of human possibility, infinitude and creativity, and Gadamer perhaps to those who are more inspired by accounts of relationality that are more strongly focusses on human finitude and facticity. We will now turn to how experiences of holism may serve a very practical role in Gadamer and Emerson's thought.

Practice of Holism – Overcoming Jealousy

As we have seen, holistic experience is something that is important for both Gadamer and Emerson. So too is the need to manage our everyday reactions, judgments and prejudices. To give a practical example, let us look at jealousy and competition in a broad sense, where someone has something that one wishes that one could have, or one is overly concerned about one's

standing in relation to others, too often leading to envy, anger and resentment, this no doubt being a good example of rigid representational thoughts or judgments. Gadamer discusses how the concerns with the facts of the matter for Plato in shared understanding excludes *phthonos*, which is:

> *Phthonos* […] means concern about being ahead of others or not being left behind by others. As such, its effect in conversation is to cause an apprehensive holding back from talk that presses toward discovering the true state of affairs. So talk that is guided by this kind of consideration for oneself is characterized by a proviso: that the talk about the facts of the matter should reflect back on the talker in a way that distinguishes him or her in a positive way. This proviso prevents the talk from adapting freely to the connections in the subject matter and thus prevents, precisely, an unreserved readiness to give an account. (1991, 44-45)

The concern here is that because of attachment to one's own status in relation to others and conceptions of oneself, one may hold to dogmatic conceptions rather than staying with the subject matter and giving an account based on this. Although this is from an early work of Gadamer's on Plato, I suggest that this may be an important aspect of a hermeneutic approach of moving towards more openness to the other in that it may help loosen reasons for holding onto dogmatic perspectives (e.g. competition with others, wanting to be ahead, etc.), helping to encourage self-transformation. For Gadamer, the orientation of openness to the other and following the subject matter is something that must be continually worked at so that one does not blindly fall into repeating habitual judgments and prejudices; rather, one is to bring prejudices into play for potential revision. In his discussion of *phthonos* in his interpretation of the passages of the *Philebus* mentioned above, Gadamer seems to be emphasizing the problem of an ill-will towards others and orientation towards competition, and he explains:

> So *phthonos* can be understood in the widest sense as: in being toward others, looking back at oneself and determining one's being toward them on the basis of this concerned regard for oneself. Its contrary can be understood, formally, as the absence of such a regard—not really as the "not begrudging" that looks back just as much but as a being toward something shared which is not contestable (is not withheld from the other person when one possesses it oneself); or, still more exactly, whose possession does not distinguish one of us over the other because it is something in which you and I are *alike*, are *the same* (*psychē, auto*). (Gadamer 1991, 186, footnote 28).

In his interpretation, Gadamer seems to be emphasizing moving past comparing and competing with others to both help reveal the subject matter in conversation and enable a reorientation towards things that are shared between people in their commonality. In respect to the latter, if we briefly consider Gadamer's aesthetics, his conception of the festival is also a viewpoints that encourages moving past our everyday purposes and identities towards more holistic experience and commonality, his understanding of the tragic is one that points towards experiences that are common to all (see Gadamer, 2004), and his understanding of *theoria* with its emphasis on participation, more relational perspectives, and commonality also points in this direction. These are all conceptions that may promote a practical re-orientation away from perspectives such as competition and jealousy and their focus on things that some have to the exclusion of others towards what people have in common. In this respect, Gadamer's emphasis here seems to be less on learning not to be jealous about specific things, but on a more radical re-orientation towards commonality, a shift that can be seen as part of the self-transformative practice of hermeneutics and part of a hermeneutic "way of life". Here hermeneutic theory informs hermeneutic practice and holistic viewpoints inform representational and discursive thought.

In respect to jealousy, Emerson has a different account of how to look at the situation when we see someone who has something we do not, one that moves beyond envy; as he writes, in his essay "Compensation," which we cited in Chapter 4 (but now include an extra sentence):

> If I feel overshadowed and outdone by great neighbours, I can yet love; I can still receive; and he that loveth maketh his own the grandeur he loves. Thereby I make the discovery that my brother is my guardian, acting for me with the friendliest designs, and the estate I so admired and envied is my own. (1983, 301)

In Emerson's view, when someone else has something, they have actualized it whereas we have this in potential. Contributing to Emerson's conception is that our inner state of mind is reflected in our outer experiences and we are all divine and are interconnected, and so we can look towards our commonwealth to find resources. That is why Emerson can write in "The Poet" that "[t]he young man reveres men of genius, because, to speak truly, they are more himself than he is. They receive of the soul as he also receives, but they more" (1983, 448). The moral of this for Emerson is that we can

learn from others, who remind us of our own depths and potentials so that we can bring to expression a creative life in our own unique way, and if we all did this we would individually and collectively live richer lives. In this case, a situation that could 'normally' elicit envy is transformed by having the resources to make a positive inner choice to reframe the situation, which may lead towards potential growth.[216] Emerson's approach is a more spiritually oriented conception whereas Gadadmer's is linguistically based, but both point towards a positive possibility of changing our lived logic, ethics, and physics, meaning bringing about a more harmonious and flourishing human life as it is lived in our material facticity.

The Present Moment

Hadot points to the importance for ancient thought of being in the present moment and also indicates that this is a perspective that he feels is important for modern people (see Hadot, 1995). He writes: "Philosophy in antiquity was an exercise practiced in each instant. It invites us to concentrate on each instant of life, to become aware of the infinite value of each present moment, once we have replaced it with the perspective of the cosmos. The exercise of wisdom contains a cosmic dimension" (1995, 273). According to Hadot, despite the differences in Stoic and Epicurean doctrine, both emphasize the value of the present moment (1995, 222). Hadot explains that the Stoics had a fundamental attitude of "attention, vigilance, and continuous tension, concentrated upon each and every moment, in order not to miss anything which is contrary to reason" (1995, 226), and they emphasized duty; in contrast the Epicureans focused on relaxing into the present moment and pleasure. Hadot points to a spiritual exercise, a practice of "[d]elimiting the present," found in Marcus Aurelius' writings, by which one's focus from the past and future is turned "in order to concentrate it upon what one is in the process of doing" (1995, 227). Hadot explains that the focus on the present in turn promotes an expansive experience: "This exercise is […] inseparable from another exercise, which consists in becoming aware of the inner richness of the present, and of the totality contained within the instant. By

[216] Emerson writes in "Experience": "Instead of feeling a poverty when we encounter a great man, let us treat the new comer like a travelling geologist, who passes through our estate, and shows us good slate, or limestone, or anthracite, in our brush pasture" (1983, 489).

delimiting the present, consciousness, far from shrinking, swells to fill the dimensions of the world" (1995, 232). In this respect, we may recall from Chapter 7 that Gadamer points to the need to focus on our limits and then uses this as a springboard towards a rhythmic poetic experience of the whole. Similarly, Emerson notes in his "Natural History of the Intellect" that "[t]he secret of power, intellectual or physical, is concentration, and all concentration involves of necessity a certain narrowness" (*W12*, 51). However, it is through this that "in learning one thing well you learn all things" (*W12*, 51) which points to how an individual part is an entry point into the whole, a theme which, as we have seen recurs throughout his thought. In "Self-Reliance" Emerson points to the need for openness and simplicity in the present, which leads to holistic experience: "Whenever a mind is simple, and receives a divine wisdom, old things pass away,—means, teachers, texts, temples fall; it lives now, and absorbs past and future into the present hour. All things are made sacred by relation to it,—one as much as another" (1983, 270). Being in the present moment with a sense of openness and wonder may encourage a transition towards the experience of a greater whole and novel experience. As we cited in Chapter 1, Emerson points to a different experience of time within moments of insight in "Works and Days":

> We ask for long life, but 'tis deep life, or grand moments, that signify. Let the measure of time be spiritual, not mechanical. Life is unnecessarily long. Moments of insight, of fine personal relation, a smile, a glance,—what ample borrowers of eternity they are. Life culminates and concentrates; and Homer said, "The gods ever give to mortals their apportioned share of reason only on one day." (*CW7,* 90*)*

Here Emerson is relating glimpses and small moments with eternity, collapsing the distinction between the transitory and the eternal.[217] For Emerson, the eternal is to be experience in the now. As we discussed in Chapter 1 and cited in Chapter 5 and 6, for Gadamer, "[t]he essence of our temporal experience of art is in learning how to tarry in this way. And

[217] Van Cromphout notes that for Goethe, "[t]he moment constitutes the fusion of time and eternity, or more precisely, the moment is eternity realizing itself in time. Though the inspired moment was a central preoccupation of Romantic (and post-Romantic) literature, Emerson's approach to it is Goethean in that he often emphasizes eternity's immanence in the moment rather than the moment as a means of transcendence" (1990, 46).

perhaps it is the only way that is granted to us finite beings to relate to what we call eternity" (1986b, 45). A question we may ask at this point is what the difference between the experience of tarrying in Gadamer's sense and the experience of the eternal in the moment as per Emerson. And a simple answer to this may be probably not that much, but Gadamer's focus is on presentation and immanence within time and Emerson works to some extent in the same direction as this, but there is also more emphasis on transcendence. This returns us to the discussion of Chapter 1 and the differences in transcendence for the transcendentalist and for Gadamer's hermeneutics of facticity, and how these may be important counterbalances to the potential excesses of each position taken in isolation.

Be that as it may, Emerson and Gadamer offer important resources to promote attending to the present moment as a way of life in a contemporary context. Hadot gives specific advice in terms of focusing on the present moment:

> […] we can realize in it an action that is well done, done for itself, with attention and consciousness. We can tell ourselves, I am applying myself to concentrating on the action I am carrying out this moment; I am doing as well as possible. We can also tell ourselves, I am here, alive, and that's enough; in other words, we can become aware of the value of existence, enjoy the pleasure of existence. (2011, 166)

In this respect, we may recall that in Chapter 6 we pointed to a potential practice that may be derived from Emerson, of attending to whatever job one is doing with attentiveness, however menial it is. In the essay "Self-Reliance," Emerson also points to how the experience of nature may lead us towards an appreciation of the moment: "These roses under my window make no reference to former roses or to better ones; they are for what they are; they exist with God to-day. There is no time to them. There is simply the rose; it is perfect in every moment of its existence" (1983, 270). Just as Hadot points to the tendency to look to the future and forget the present, Emerson points to the value of the present: "[M]an postpones or remembers, he does not live in the present, but with reverted eye laments the past, or, heedless of the riches that surround him, stands on tiptoe to foresee the future. He cannot be happy and strong until he too lives with nature in the present, above time" (1983, 270). Thus, we may be reminded the rose lives in the moment and does not compare itself to other roses, and we may learn

this lesson as well. Emerson points to the tendency to lament the past and not appreciate what we have in the present, which could be conceived as two important practices of letting go of regret and appreciating what we have to help encourage what we have in the present moment.

An important emphasis on Emerson's thought is on receptive spontaneity rather than staying within the limitations of our habits and discursive thought, and he seeks to remind us of our more fluid and profound possibilities through attending to the present moment. In the essay "Experience," Emerson remarks that "[s]ince our office is with moments, let us husband them" (1983, 479). Hadot points to how the Stoics emphasized a willed effort in attuning to the present moment whereas for the Epicureans this was an experience of relaxation, and in terms of husbanding moments this could be understood as a practice of both conscious attunement and relaxing into the spontaneity of the moment; for example, Hadot points to how Goethe "enjoyed the present moment like an Epicurean, and willed it intensely like a Stoic" (1995, 230). The basic approach of appreciating the present moment could be seen as an important spiritual practice that is relevant to modern concerns.

Individual Aspects of Universality and Joy and the Importance of Abundance in a Contemporary Capitalist Society

Hadot emphasizes overcoming particularity in a movement towards the universal, a conception that seems to downplay the role of individuality. For example, as we considered in Chapter 3, in Hadot's paper criticizing Foucault he makes the point that the Stoic Seneca "does not find his joy in 'Seneca,' but by transcending 'Seneca'; by discovering that there is within him – within all human beings […] within the cosmos itself – a reason which is a part of universal reason" (1995, 207). Although such a perspective would be true for Emerson to some, perhaps even to a large extent, for Emerson heightened experiences of relationality may not only be seen as subsuming our individuality, but rather as an enhancement of it in some sense as one reconnects to a greater whole, a fundamental Emersonian paradox. For example, Emerson's understanding of what he calls Character is a type of genius and power that if we tap into can flow through us and realize itself in experience and creation. Emerson in various places points to this both being

a universal experience and also as one with unique and individual aspects. In his 1844 essay "Character," Emerson describes how someone who is contact with his Character will succeed in practical affairs (1983, 496) and he notes that a person acting from their strength of character "communicates to all his own faith," (1983, 497) and that "this is a natural power, like light and heat, and all nature cooperates with it. The reason why we feel one man's presence, and do not feel another's, is a simple as gravity" (1983, 498). This gives such a person power and moral authority: "He is thus the medium of the highest influence to all who are not on the same level. Thus, men of character are the conscience of the society to which they belong" (1983, 499). Broadly considered, for Emerson The Scholar, Man Thinking or The Poet serve similar roles of social conscience. When a person manifests their Character, there is a strong grounding within themselves: "Character is centrality, the impossibility of being displaced or overset" (1983, 500). This involves establishing an authentic connection with oneself, which he relates to growth and a happy future (1983, 502). There is thus an attitude of open hope for a positive future and creative capacity. We must go our own way, and we are each unique in this: "Nature never rhymes her children, nor makes two men alike" (1983, 505). Here is what I see as a crucial 'modern' twist to Emersonian impersonality; when we experience ourselves authentically there is uniqueness that is in some way aligned harmoniously with the greater whole and co-creates along with it and it through us.

Given the influence of individualism in contemporary society, I think Emerson's appreciation for individuality is an important consideration for transcendence in a contemporary context. In Emerson's view, we should each bring out our best and encourage others in this pursuit as well. Emerson writes in "Natural History of the Intellect": "Power fraternizes with power, and wishes you not to be like him but like yourself" (*W12*, 30); that is, we not only conform with the universal, but something in our own individual makeup. Emerson explains that "[e]ach [person] has a certain aptitude for knowing or doing somewhat which, when it appears, is so adapted and aimed on that, that it seems a sort of obtuseness to everything else. Well, this aptitude, if he would obey it, would prove a telescope to bring under his clear vision what was blur to everybody else" (*W12*, 31). According to Emerson, when we follow our individual interests and abilities and express them through making them manifest in our daily lives, this opens up new possibilities for everyone else. Put another way, by pursuing our own

development in an authentic way, we are actually also being ethical towards others, such possibly being conceived as a positive by-product of the Emersonian individual who is acting in harmony with the whole in a creative way.

For Hadot, as we saw in Chapter 1, an important aspect of ancient thought was that it was a "therapeutic of the passions" which involves a transfer from ordinary way of seeing the world to the viewpoint of universal nature. Within this viewpoint passion is something to be overcome by living in accord with reason, which seems to involve a reduction or tempering of desires. More generally, Hadot points to how for the Epicureans, "[t]he quality of pleasure does not depend on the quantity of desires it satisfies" and the best pleasures are least associated with worry and promote peace of mind and can be "procured by the satisfaction of natural and necessary desires; that is, those desires which are essential and necessary for preservation" (1995, 223). The point here seems to generally be that living in conforming with reason is to live modestly with limited desires. However, for example, given the importance of wealth in a modern capitalist economy, this could have limited appeal (on the other hand this could be seen as an important counter-position, perhaps unappealing but possibly necessary).

In this respect, the way that Emerson values wealth may provide an important 'menu option' for conceiving the relation between wealth and self-realization in a contemporary context. Emerson notes in the 1862 lecture "The Essential Principles of Religion," that "[a] man must have his roots in nature, and draw his strength there from; his desires and needs are great" (2003, 237). Emerson's sense of optimism and expansion is reflected in his views of wealth, abundance, and even luxury and the value of bringing these about as they provide opportunity and freedom. However, for Emerson wealth needs to be used for spiritually valuable ends, and as such, both in respect to the value of wealth and its need to be directed in profound directions, these may be a very helpful points of view in respect to considering philosophy as a way of life in contemporary capitalist culture. As Schulz explains, despite the fact that Emerson has often been linked to capitalistic economic ideals his perspective has been misunderstood, "[f]or to praise a phenomenon, in Emerson's thought, does not necessarily involve its justification. What attracts Emerson to the world of business is its latent spirituality" (2012, 53). Emerson saw wealth in a positive light, although it should be used to support spiritual growth. Schulz explains: "According to

Emerson, we have to accept the world of business as our world and try to redeem it not by denying but by intensifying and purifying its energies. What is needed is a truly enlightened self-interest." (2012, 59). Wealth shouldn't be pursued for narrow self-interest or as an end in itself, but wealth and business should be used towards broader and more virtuous and generous ends; in Schulz's view, "Emerson launches a critique of individualism *qua* materialism that is all the more devastating as it subverts the system from within" (2012, 110). Having a positive view of abundance and the dynamic and creative capacity for business to contribute to aspects of our cultural and spiritual growth allowed Emerson to both inspire and critique. Emerson's vision may be a helpful approach for philosophy as a way of life in a contemporary context as a way of bringing change to oneself and the community. For Emerson, abundance and wealth are valuable as is desire, which should not be extinguished or necessarily limited, but rather purified and sublimated to return in more potent and creative forms, to unleash it to higher ends. In our considerations of philosophy as a way of life in a present-day context, re-conceiving desire in terms of purifying and refining self-interest may be a helpful approach to complement the emphasis on limiting desires or modest desires such as Hadot emphasizes in relation to ancient philosophical thought.

The Dawning Sun and Metaphysics of Light

In order to overcome our habitual tendencies, whether conceived of as thought or language, attentiveness is important. Thoreau writes:

> We must learn to reawaken and keep ourselves awake, not by mechanical aids, but by an infinite expectation of the dawn, which does not forsake us in our soundest sleep. I know of no more encouraging fact than the unquestionable ability of man to elevate his life by a conscious endeavor. […] To affect the quality of the day, that is highest of arts. Every man is tasked to make his life, even in its details, worthy of the contemplation of his most elevated and critical hour. (2004, 181)

This task of attending to the moment and affecting the quality of the day may be seen as a primary spiritual practice which resonates with value of being in the present moment discussed above. The dawn that Thoreau mentions may be understood as a symbol of profound transformation, such as described when Emerson writes that: "Every man takes care that his

neighbor shall not cheat him. But a day comes when he begins to care that he do not cheat his neighbor. Then all goes well. He has changed his market-cart into a chariot of the sun" (1983, 1062-1063). This dawning sun is a symbol of the realization of a greater whole and a reminder of our common unity, and is one which seemingly has the potential to cut against contemporary materialism and wealth disparity. This radical ethical re-orientation resonates with Gadamer's conception of orienting towards our commonality with others and the community.

Emerson makes it clear that one is not to be subservient to the customs of which we could say that the "market-cart" may be a symbol, of the normative forces and values held in place by society. Despite the fact that Emerson focusses on self-reliance, in his 1841 essay "Man the Reformer," despite reiterating his position as to the importance of self-help (see 1983, 145), he also points to the value of love and care for our fellow people:

> Let our affection flow out to our fellows; it would operate in a day the greatest of all resolutions. It is better to work on institutions by the sun than by the wind. The state must consider the poor man, and all voices must speak for him. Every child that is born must have a just chance for his bread. Let the amelioration in our laws of property proceed from the concession of the rich, not the grasping of the poor. (1983, 148-149)

Here we can see the crucial ethical aspects of Emerson's thought and here the sun and light may be seen both as symbols and metaphysics that open a way to the experience of our commonality with others, one which has a very practical and easily understood consequence; that is, an acknowledgement of the rich that they have an obligation to help others. When Emerson remarks in his lecture "Essential Principles of Religion" that "the Genius or Destiny of America is no log or sluggard, but a man incessantly advancing, as the shadow of the dial's face, or of the heavenly body by whose light it is marked. The office of America is to liberate, to abolish king-craft, priest-craft, caste, monopoly, to pull down the gallows, to burn up the bloody statute book, to take in the immigrant" (2003, 239), in our times of increasing tribalism, religious dogmatism and wealth disparity Emerson's statement seemingly has striking, even shocking contemporary relevance. For Emerson, if we suppress another's potential for our own gain, whether it is under the auspices of economic, religious or some other justification, we are committing a spiritual error, one that not only hurts

others but curtails our own relation to a greater whole. Emerson writes in "Man the Reformer" that "[t]his great, overgrown, dead Christendom of ours still keeps alive at least the name of the lover of mankind. But one day all men will be lovers; and every calamity will be dissolved in the universal sunshine" (1983, 149). When we consider Gadamer's crucial aesthetic insight of altering one's life through recognizing our commonality with others, this also potentially carries with it a strong ethical re-orientation towards helping others, although Gadamer's version is in more aesthetic and secular terms. Whether the sun and light may be conceived symbolically, metaphysically, philosophically, or religiously, an aspect of this may be seen as an impetus to work against positions that emphasize excessive self-gain at the expense of others, encouraging a greater opening to the possibility of harmony, beauty and goodness. It should be recalled that Emerson does encourage our own wealth, power, and self-reliance, but this is in such a way that it both benefits others and the greater whole. In a certain sense, we could put this as a choice of attentiveness between the symbol of the market-cart, which resonates with a shallow egotism and self-gain, and that of the coming dawn of the sun and a greater experience of interconnection, respect, abundance and flourishing that this may suggest. As mentioned above, for Thoreau the great accomplishment is affecting the quality of the day. As cited in Chapter 4, when Emerson writes that "[t]hough we travel the world over to find the beautiful, we must carry it with us, or we find it not" (1983, 435), this indicates that in order to experience the beautiful we must cultivate it in ourselves.[218] When Gadamer draws upon the metaphysics of light, the beautiful and the good in the closing pages of *Truth and Method*, even as he backs away from the metaphysical aspects of these viewpoints they still carry with them resonances of Platonism and Neo-Platonism and the perennial tradition of Western thought; the light of the good now shines forth in its immanence within the beautiful, of which artwork and poetry are primary placeholders. I would suggest that Emerson's and Gadamer's focus on beauty and harmony provide ways of conceptualizing our common unity

[218] Hadot writes in respect to unitive contemplation in relation to Seneca that "in order to recognize wisdom, we must, so to speak, go into training for wisdom. We can know a thing only by becoming similar to our object. Thus, by a total conversion, we can render ourselves open to the world and to wisdom" (1995, 261). As we discussed in Chapter 4 and 6, for Plotinus, like is known by like and for both Plato and Plotinus we should endeavor to be as godlike as possible in order to experience the Forms/Intellect and the Good/One.

and helping encourage such experience in our daily lives and in the community. When Emerson proclaims in "Man the Reformer" that "[l]et me feel that I am to be a lover. I am to see to it that the world is the better for me, and to find my reward in the act" (1983, 149), this points to a fundamental reorientation towards an understanding of our responsibility towards others and a lived ethics, a viewpoint that both Gadamer and Hadot would most surely agree with.

An Emersonian emphasis on self-reliance does not imply solipsism as when we move within, we connect to a greater whole. For Emerson, if we would we all work towards listening to ourselves better there will be a much more potent, creative, and respectful sharing and co-creation together. Here we can see a movement towards an ethics of mutual respect and reflexive co-creation, one which I would suggest finds common ground with Gadamer's perspective of looking to our commonality with others to foster practical self-transformation.

In Emerson's view, we are connected to a greater whole; as he writes in the essay "Character," "[w]e shall one day see that the most private is the most public energy, that quality atones for quantity, and grandeur of character acts in the dark, and succors them who never saw it" (1983, 508). For Emerson, everything is interconnected, we mutually influence one another, and we need to work towards bringing out the best in ourselves. Likewise, when Gadamer focuses on the choice to be open to the other, this is intrinsically related to our social co-creation with others. In this sense, any form of self-transformation may actually be seen the promoting collective transformation of language and tradition, even is such is only the proverbial drop in an ocean. As such, I would suggest although neither Emerson nor Gadamer have well-developed conceptions of social activism[219] and change, both actually promote a form of what I will call 'inner activism,' by which I mean that the any shift in self-understanding may be considered as form of 'activism' as it has some impact on the greater world. As Emerson writes in "Fate", "[c]ertain ideas are in the air. We are all impressionable, for we are made of them; all impressionable, but some more than others, and these first express them" (1983, 965). We are receptive to such ideas and they influence us, but when we have ideas we also influence others. For both Gadamer and Emerson each part is related to a greater whole, whether we conceive this linguistically or metaphysically.

[219] See Gougeon (2014) who maintains that political and social reform was important for Emerson.

This does not mean that one does not need to act on the outer world to effect change, Although Emerson has been criticized for his slow uptake in fighting slavery, he did take up the abolitionist cause.[220] In this respect, self-reliance is about entering into one's strength through an authentic relation to oneself and coming from this place of strength. This potentially has a component of respecting and helping others.

Hadot states that "[a]ncient philosophical traditions can provide guidance in our relationship to ourselves, to the cosmos, and to other human beings" (1995, 274), and argues against the perspective, which he calls a "cliché" of modern historians, that "ancient philosophy was an escape mechanism" (1995, 274). He points out that ancient philosophy was always practiced in a group, was a common effort with mutual support and notes that philosophers worked to transform their cities and society. He maintains more generally that a "concern for living in the service of the human community, and for acting in accordance with justice is an essential element of every philosophical life" (1995, 274). Indeed, the Transcendentalist Club composed of luminaries such as Thoreau, Margaret Fuller, and Emerson himself may serve as an example of such a community of mutual support. In this respect, just as for Gadamer there are eminent texts, perhaps there are also eminent communities, ones which carry forth the light, the beautiful and the good in the hope of renewing its members and humankind.[221] Perhaps such communities may in some way take on the role of the spiritual schools of ancient thought in a contemporary context in a more 'ad hoc' way; indeed, for example, even attending academic conferences in the spirit of common interest, despite being short-term and not having the continuity of a philosophical school of antiquity may perhaps be seen as contingent 'festivals' of mutual interest and support.

[220] Gougeon writes: "In light of the established historical/biographical record that emerged in the 1990s, most scholars today acknowledge the fact that Emerson did engage in substantial political and social reform activities, especially anti-slavery, from the mid-1840s to the Civil War" (2014, 185).

[221] Hadot points to the challenge the philosopher when engaging with the community: "The trick is to maintain oneself on the level of on the level of reason, and not allow oneself to be blinded by political passions, anger, resentments, or prejudices. To be sure, there is an equilibrium – almost impossible to achieve – between the inner peace brought about by wisdom, and the passions to which the sight of the injustices, sufferings, and misery of mankind cannot help but give rise. Wisdom, however, consists in precisely such an equilibrium, and inner peace is indispensable for efficacious action" (1995, 274).

Conclusion

In this chapter we have explored how Gadamer and Emerson provide dynamic conceptions of universality that may be helpful in respect to developing how conceptions of universality and philosophy as a way of life may be applied in a contemporary context. We have considered how Gadamer's hermeneutics provides a contemporary discourse to support the important emphasis Hadot places on living according to reason. We have explored possible forms that a lived logic, physics and ethics may take in a contemporary context and their connections to ancient conceptions. We explored three 'menu options' of experiences of universality, Hadot's objective approach, Emerson's more dynamic metaphysical approach which has affinities with both ancient viewpoints and Gadamer's approach, and Gadamer's emergent and dynamic linguistic and ontological approach. We have also considered how experiences of holism, attending to the present moment, and individuality may be conceived as practices, as well as considered how the inherent relationality of Gadamer and Emerson's thought leads to each part influencing the greater whole. The symbols of the sun and light were pointed to as symbols that which harbor importance resonances from Western metaphysical thought, and the role of supportive communities of like-minded thinkers was considered.

Conclusion

As we bring our exploration and considerations of philosophy as a way of life and a form it may take in a contemporary context to a close, let us review some of the ground we have covered. Grounded in Hadot's vision of philosophy as a way of life, we have explored how a variety of practices may be drawn from Gadamer´s and Emerson's thought. For example, in Chapter 2 we examined the important role of dialogue as a philosophical practice and how Gadamer emphasizes outer dialogue, whereas Emerson emphasizes inner dialogue. Practices were drawn from Gadamer based around his conception of the I/Thou relation and Emerson understanding of self-reliance and I presented the case that their approaches are complementary to one another and taken together better cover the broad conception of dialogue as a practice that Hadot indicates.

In Chapter 3 we examined how Gadamer, Hadot and Emerson have differing approaches to interpretation, each of which may be viewed as forms of philosophical practices with different emphases. In particular, we considered how Hadot's approaches imply a strong universalism that may be problematic in a contemporary context and considered Gadamer's approach to interpretation as a way of considering universality with a stronger focus on plurality and creativity. We extended this line of thought into Chapter 4, where we explored Emerson's emphasis on the value of intuitive reason. We considered how Emerson's thought has an affinity to ancient philosophical views and also incorporates a more dynamic and co-creative aspect. We also discussed the importance of optimism in Emerson's thought and the value of focussing on the positive. We drew upon Stoic viewpoints and contemporary linguistic interpretations of Emerson to suggest a practice of becoming aware of one's thoughts and how one uses language, which could be drawn upon to help foster focussing on the positive and one's ideals. Emerson's practice of writing down heightened insights for later recall was also noted and related to the ancient philosophical practices of bringing dogmas or the tenets of philosophical schools to mind.

In Chapter 5, we explored Gadamer's aesthetics and Emerson's aesthetic and spiritual viewpoints and found a variety of approaches and

practices intended to foster more relational viewpoints and dynamic and creative perspectives. For example, Gadamer's conceptions of the symbol, festival and the beautiful were considered and Emerson's understanding of the symbol, analogy, and the dynamic role of metaphor in his thought were explored. Commonalities between Gadamer's and Emerson's thought were noted, but it was concluded, not surprisingly, that Gadamer emphasizes the concrete and the forms of presentation more than Emerson, who emphasizes transcendence to a greater extent, and it was pointed out that these each of these viewpoints may be complementary to and balance the potential excesses of the other. A variety of approaches were considered for encouraging breaking away from habitual discursive viewpoints to encourage more intuitive and poetic perspectives, such as approaches to metaphor and poetic language, exercises derived from Plotinus' thought, and symbolic approaches.

In Chapter 6, we explored the Greek conception of *theoria* with an emphasis of Plato's views, and considered how Gadamer understands *theoria* as intensified experience of truth within the auspices of aesthetics rather than metaphysics, adding in more dynamic and grounded aspects with an emphasis on relationality. The significant proximity between Emerson's viewpoints and ancient conceptions of *theoria* was considered (although there is a more creative component to Emerson's thought). It was explored how Emerson encourages the experience of nature, which could be considered as a form of lived physics or *theorizing* nature, and a variety of practices were drawn out of Emerson's thought. These included a contemplative experience of nature, the importance of concentration, drill and repetition and opening to more expansive viewpoints and the ability to modulate between these more focussed and expansive perspectives; appreciating both the work that one is doing however trivial and the importance of building a fulfilling career, etc.

In Chapter 7 we considered how although Gadamer focusses on human culture rather than nature, there seems to be an implicit consideration of nature that could bear with being developed further by drawing upon Emerson's strong emphasis on nature. Emerson's radical conception of history which includes nature was pointed to in this respect, and a conception of the festival was developed which extended Gadamer's conception with its cultural focus towards nature. A variety of approaches were considered, from reading accounts of nature written by others, to Hadot's suggestion of

engaging phenomenological and aesthetic viewpoints, to the dynamic experience of *physis*, be it through an experience of nature, thought, philosophical writing, or otherwise. Thinkers such as Goethe and John Muir were briefly drawn upon to help extend Gadamer's and Emerson's viewpoints towards more eco-centric perspectives.

We also considered how language seems to take on the role of God and a Divine Mind in contemporary thought and both viewpoints promote experiences of transcendence. This pointed us to an important commonality in Gadamer's and Emerson's thought, where Gadamer through emphasizing language and Emerson emphasizing metaphysics more both promote experiences of transcendence. This insight was mobilized in Chapter 8, where we suggested that Gadamer's hermeneutics with its theoretic emphasis on language could be a helpful way of providing a contemporary discourse to support Hadot's appeal to live according to reason. Through a consideration of revisionary and more traditional readings of Emerson, it was pointed out that metaphysical and linguistic viewpoints both have valuable resources for developing discourses around philosophical practices and that each approach could appeal to people of different tastes. Consideration was given to what a lived logics, physics and ethics could consist in for present-day application. As we have seen, Hadot emphasizes the importance of the experience of universality in contrast to Foucault's emphasis on self-creation, and I have suggested that Gadamer and Emerson provide approaches that provide more dynamic experiences of universality with a greater emphasis on plurality, and that these approaches may be helpful for present-day application. A 'menu option' of universality was presented, from the more objective to the more dynamic. Practical approaches related to overcoming jealousy through the experience of holistic viewpoints and the practice of focussing on the present moment were presented, and the importance of individuality, community and wealth were considered as aspects of modern life that philosophy as a way of life may need to address and incorporate.

Summary

Philosophy as a way of life is an emerging approach within philosophy that is based on Pierre Hadot's understanding of ancient philosophy that emphasizes philosophy as a practical method of self-transformation (see Hadot 1995, 2001, 2004). This is a compelling approach which moves beyond the academic emphasis of philosophy being a matter of abstract understanding, pointing to the possibility of a reinvigorated contemporary approach to philosophy that combines both theoretical understanding and practical transformation.

This dissertation draws upon the thinking of Hans-Georg Gadamer and Ralph Waldo Emerson to help develop a practical approach to philosophy that is relevant to contemporary concerns. I present the case that Gadamer and Emerson are very suitable thinkers to focus upon as they are both practical thinkers who emphasize self-transformation rather than abstract understanding and so are helpful thinkers to consider in relation to philosophy as a way of life. Hadot emphasizes experiences of transcendence and universality and Gadamer and Emerson are both thinkers who reserve important roles for transcendence, universality, and relational experiences more generally. An important focus within this work is how Gadamer and Emerson present dynamic approaches towards universality that incorporate notions of plurality.

In Chapter 1, I introduce Hadot's notion of philosophy as a way of life and consider two thinkers, Michel Foucault and John Cooper, both of whom, like Hadot, emphasize philosophy as a practical activity, although their visions of what this entails differs in various ways from Hadot's. I introduce and briefly compare Gadamer's and Emerson's thought and consider how these thinkers from two different traditions of thought relate to one another. I also point to their relevance in respect to bridging Hadot, who focusses on universality, and Foucault who focusses on plurality and fragmentation. I do this through pointing to forms of dynamic universality within Gadamer's and Emerson's thought, which I develop at various points throughout the dissertation, culminating in the final chapter.

Numerous philosophical practices are drawn from Gadamer's and Emerson's works throughout the dissertation. Chapter 2 focusses on Hadot's conception of dialogue as a spiritual practice and draws upon Gadamer and Emerson to provide practical approaches to help cover the broad vision of Hadot's approach, which points to the value of both outer and inner dialogue. Gadamer emphasizes outer dialogue, whereas Emerson emphasizes inner dialogue, and it is suggested that their viewpoints are complementary.

In Chapter 3, Gadamer's, Hadot's and Emerson's differing understandings of the interpretation of tradition are considered and how their approaches provide alternative ways to understand interpretation as a self-transformative practice. I consider how Hadot's understanding of interpretation implies a strong effort at objectivity and universalism that may be problematic in a contemporary context and I consider how Gadamer's approach to interpretation as a way of considering universality with a stronger focus on plurality and creativity.

This line of thought is extended into Chapter 4, where we explore Emerson's emphasis on the value of intuitive reason and how Emerson's thought has an affinity to ancient philosophical views and also incorporates more dynamic and co-creative aspects. Emerson's distinction between reason as a form of intuition which he prioritizes over the discursive thought is considered. The important role of optimism and focussing on ideals that is found in Emerson's thought is explored and a practice of attentiveness to our thoughts and how we use language is suggested, one that is inspired by Stoic conceptions.

Chapter 5 explores Gadamer's aesthetics and Emerson's aesthetic and spiritual approaches. Both Gadamer and Emerson emphasize the importance of experiences of unity and a variety of approaches to encourage the practical experience of relational states are presented. Gadamer's conceptions of the symbol, festival and the beautiful are considered and Emerson's understanding of the symbol, analogy, and the dynamic role of metaphor in his thought are explored. Commonalities between Gadamer's and Emerson's thought are noted, but it is concluded, not surprisingly, that Gadamer emphasizes the concrete and the forms of presentation more than Emerson, who emphasizes transcendence to a greater extent. It is suggested that these each of these viewpoints may be complementary and balance the potential excesses of the other. Practical exercises derived from Plotinus' thought are also considered.

In Chapter 6 I explore the ancient Greek conceptions of *theoria*, specifically Plato's, and relate these viewpoints to Gadamer's and Emerson's thought. Gadamer and Emerson are drawn upon for a variety of approaches that encourage the experience of *theoria* in ways that are relevant for present-day concerns. Gadamer understands *theoria* as intensified experiences of truth within the auspices of aesthetics rather than metaphysics and adds in more dynamic and grounded aspects with an emphasis on relationality. The significant proximity between Emerson's viewpoints and ancient conceptions of *theoria* is considered (although there is a more creative component to Emerson's thought). It is considered how Emerson encourages the experience of nature, which could be considered as a form of lived physics or *theorizing* nature, and a variety of practices are drawn out of Emerson's thought. These include a contemplative experience of nature, the importance of concentration, drill and repetition and opening to more expansive viewpoints and the ability to modulate between these more focussed and expansive perspectives; appreciating both the work that one is doing however trivial; and the importance of building a fulfilling career.

In Chapter 7 I explore how although Gadamer focusses on human culture rather than nature, there seems to be an implicit consideration of nature that could bear with being developed further by drawing upon Emerson's strong emphasis on nature. Emerson's radical conception of history which includes nature is pointed to in this respect, and a notion of the festival is developed which extends Gadamer's conception of the festival with its cultural focus towards nature. A variety of approaches are considered, from reading accounts of nature written by others, to Hadot's suggestion of engaging phenomenological and aesthetic viewpoints, to the dynamic experience of *physis*, be it through an experience of nature, thought, philosophical writing, or otherwise. Thinkers such as Goethe and John Muir are briefly drawn upon to help extend Gadamer's and Emerson's viewpoints towards more eco-centric perspectives. It is also examined how language seems to take on the role of God and a Divine Mind in contemporary thought and both viewpoints promote experiences of transcendence. This points to an important commonality in Gadamer's and Emerson's thought, where Gadamer emphasizes language and Emerson emphasizes metaphysics to both promote experiences of transcendence.

In Chapter 8, I suggest that Gadamer's hermeneutics with its theoretic emphasis on language could be a helpful way of providing a contemporary

discourse to support Hadot's appeal to live according to reason. Through a consideration of revisionary and more metaphysical interpretations of Emerson, it is pointed out that metaphysical and linguistic viewpoints both have valuable resources for developing discourses around philosophical practices and that each approach could appeal to people of different tastes. Consideration is given to what a lived logics, physics and ethics could consist in for present-day application. Given Hadot emphasis on the importance of the experience of universality in contrast to Foucault's emphasis on self-creation, I suggest that Gadamer and Emerson offer approaches that provide more dynamic experiences of universality with a greater emphasis on plurality, approaches that may be helpful for present-day application. A 'menu option' of universality is presented, from the more objective to the more dynamic and fluid. Practical approaches related to overcoming jealousy through the experience of holistic viewpoints and the focussing on the present moment are presented. The importance of individuality, community and wealth are considered as aspects of modern life that philosophy as a way of life may need to address and incorporate.

In summary, this dissertation explores a wide-ranging approach to a possible form that philosophy as a way of life may take in a contemporary context, one which takes Hadot's emphasis on transcendence and universality and develops this in a more dynamic way by drawing upon Gadamer and Emerson. In many ways, Gadamer and Emerson provide complementary viewpoints that lend themselves to counterbalancing the other's position; for example, Gadamer's emphasis on human finitude, openness to the other, and the value of tradition, and the ubiquitous role of language, versus Emerson's emphasis on human infinitude, listening to oneself, the need to break past restrictive societal customs, and the importance of metaphysics. However, underlying these differences is a commitment in both Gadamer and Emerson to conceptions of beauty, order, universality, harmony and goodness, a commonality they have with ancient philosophical viewpoints, and it is suggested that linguistic and metaphysical viewpoints may have more in common than is apparent at first glance. Numerous philosophical practices or what Hadot calls "spiritual exercises" are drawn from Gadamer´s and Emerson´s thought along with some from ancient philosophical thought to present a multi-faced approach to practices which may be supported by various forms of discourse relevant to contemporary concerns.

Útdráttur

Heimspeki sem lífsmáti er heimspekileg nálgun sem nú sækir óðum í sig veðrið og byggir á þeim skilningi sem Pierre Hadot lagði í kenningar úr fornöld er halda heimspeki á lofti sem verklegri aðferð til að umbreyta sjálfum sér. Þessi nálgun hefur margt til brunns að bera vegna þess hvernig hún brýst úr viðjum akademískrar heimspeki með tilheyrandi áherslu á óhlutbundinn skilning og opnar fyrir möguleikann á því að nálgast heimspekina í samtímanum af endurnýjuðum krafti með það að leiðarljósi að skilningur á sviði kenninga fari saman við umbreytingu á sviði athafna.

Þessi doktorsritgerð leitar fanga í hugsun Hans-Georgs Gadamer og Ralphs Waldo Emerson með það fyrir augum að móta verklega nálgun á heimspeki sem getur látið til sín taka í samtímanum. Gengið er út frá því að í ljósi samtímans sé einkar viðeigandi að leita til Gadamers og Emersons vegna þess að þeir eru báðir athafnamiðaðir hugsuðir sem hampa sjálfsumbreytingu fremur en óhlutbundnum skilningi og reynast því góður liðsauki þegar heimspeki sem lífsmáti er annars vegar. Hadot leggur áherslu á reynslu af handanveru og hinu almenna, og bæði Gadamer og Emerson eru hugsuðir sem ætla handanverunni, hinu almenna og reynslu af tengslum í víðari skilningi mikilvægt hlutverk. Eitt meginatriðið í ritgerðinni er að skoða hvernig Gadamer og Emerson hafa fram að færa dýnamískar nálganir á hið almenna sem taka einnig til fjölbreytileikans.

Í 1. kafla er hugmynd Hadots um heimspeki sem lífsmáta kynnt til sögu og litið til tveggja hugsuða, Michels Foucault og Johns Cooper, sem halda fram hugmynd um heimspeki sem verklega iðju eins og Hadot, að vísu með nokkuð öðru sniði. Jafnframt er hugsun Gadamers annars vegar og Emersons hins vegar kynnt og kenningar þeirra bornar saman í stuttu máli, og tekið er til athugunar hvaða tengingar megi finna milli þessara tveggja fulltrúa ólíkra heimspekihefða. Bent er á hvernig þeir svara kalli samtímans í krafti þess hvernig þeir brúa bilið milli Hadots, með áherslu sinni á hið almenna, og Foucaults, með áherslu sinni á fjölbreytileika og hið brotakennda. Þessu marki er náð með því að draga fram, í þessum kafla og raunar í allri ritgerðinni, hvernig hugmyndir um að hið almenna sé dýnamískt eru að verki í hugsun Gadamers og Emersons.

Í ritgerðinni eru ýmis drög að heimspekilegum iðkunum leidd af verkum Gadamers og Emersons. Í 2. kafla er sjónum beint að hugmynd Hadots um samræðu sem andlega iðju og sýnt fram á hvernig hugsun Gadamers og Emersons getur lagt sitt af mörkum til að dýpka sýn Hadots á þetta efni, með því að Gadamer leggur áherslu á ytri samræðu en Emerson innri samræðu. Rök eru færð fyrir því að þessi tvö sjónarhorn bæti hvort annað upp.

Í 3. kafla er vikið að ólíkri sýn Gadamers, Hadots og Emersons á það hvernig túlka beri fortíðina eða hefðina. Jafnframt er tekið til umræðu hvernig nálganir hugsuðanna þriggja láta í té ólíkar leiðir til að skilja túlkun sem sjálfsumbreytingu. Kannað er hvernig skilningur Hadots á túlkun felur í sér sterka tilhneigingu til hlutlægni og almannahyggju sem getur verið vandkvæðum bundin í samtímanum. Leitað er til Gadamers um sýn á túlkun sem leggur meiri áherslu á fjölbreytileika og sköpun innan hins almenna.

Haldið er áfram með þessa hugsun í 4. kafla, þar sem áhersla Emersons á gildi innsæis við beitingu skynseminnar er skoðuð. Leitt er í ljós hvernig hugsun Emersons sver sig í ætt við ýmis viðhorf úr fornöld og skoðað hvernig hún býr yfir dýnamískum þáttum sem tengjast sameiginlegri sköpun. Sú afstaða Emersons að líta á skynsemi sem tiltekið afbrigði innsæis, en ekki sem málbundna hugsun, er skoðuð. Hugað er að því mikla vægi sem Emerson ljær bjartsýni og því að horfa til hugsjóna og vakið er máls á mikilvægi þeirrar iðju, sem rekja má til Stóumanna, að taka vel eftir hugsunum okkar og því hvernig við notum tungumálið.

Í 5. kafla beinist athyglin að fagurfræði Gadamers og fagurfræðilegum og andlegum nálgunum að hætti Emersons. Leitt er í ljós hvernig þeir hampa báðir vægi heildrænnar reynslu, og hvernig finna má hjá þeim margvíslegar aðferðir sem ýta undir verklega reynslu af tengslum af ýmsum toga. Hugmyndir Gadamers um táknið, hátíðina og hið fagra eru skoðaðar og skilningur Emersons á tákninu, hliðstæðunni og lifandi hlutverki myndhverfinga er rannsakaður. Ýmis atriði sem hugsuðirnir tveir eiga sameiginleg eru dregin fram, en niðurstaðan er sú að Gadamer leggur meiri áherslu á áþreifanlegar birtingarmyndir en Emerson, sem ljær aftur á móti hinu handanlæga meira vægi. Því er haldið fram að sýn hugsuðanna tveggja bæti hvor aðra upp þannig að sneitt sé hjá öfgum. Í kaflanum er einnig hugað að verklegum æfingum sem leiða má af hugsun Plótínosar.

Í 6. kafla eru forngrískar hugmyndir um *teoríu* teknar til skoðunar, sér í lagi hugmyndir Platons, og þær tengdar við hugsun Gadamers og Emersons. Í hugsun þeirra síðarnefndu eru sóttar ýmsar nálganir sem ýta undir reynslu

af *teoríu* af því tagi sem máli skiptir í samtímanum. Gadamer tengir *teoríu* við djúptækar upplifanir af sannleikanum af fagurfræðilegum toga, fremur en frumspekilegum, og leggur til málanna dýnamíska og jarðtengda þætti sem ýta undir tengslamyndun. Dregið er fram hvernig hugmyndir Emersons fara nærri fornum hugmyndum um *teoríu* en skilja sig líka frá þeim með áherslu sinni á sköpun. Tekið er til athugunar hvernig Emerson hvetur til upplifunar á náttúrunni, og heldur þannig fram því sem kalla má eðlisfræði upplifunarinnar eða teoretískri náttúrusýn, og sýnt hvernig finna má drög að margvíslegum iðkunum í hugsun Emersons. Þar á meðal eru náttúrureynsla í anda íhugunar, einbeiting, þjálfun og endurtekning, opinn hugur gagnvart víðtækum sjónarhornum og sá hæfileiki að finna meðalveg milli sjónarhorna sem leggja áherslu á hið sértæka annars vegar og hið víðtæka hins vegar; að kunna að meta starfið sem maður innir af hendi, hversu fáfengilegt sem það annars er; og mikilvægi þess að starfa við það sem veitir manni ánægju.

Í 7. kafla er hugað að því hvernig Gadamer beinir sjónum að menningu fremur en náttúru, en engu að síður virðist vera til staðar, í hugsun hans, undirliggjandi hugmynd um náttúruna sem þróa má áfram með því að tengja við sterka áherslu á náttúruna að hætti Emersons. Róttæk hugmynd Emersons um söguna, sem tekur einnig til náttúrunnar, er dregin fram í þessu samhengi og jafnframt er mótuð hugmynd um *hátíðina* sem útvíkkar hugmynd Gadamers um sama efni og tengir hana við náttúruna. Ýmsar nálganir eru teknar til skoðunar, frá því að lesa náttúrulýsingar annarra og þeirri tillögu Hadots að taka sjónarmið fyrirbærafræði og fagurfræði með í reikninginn, til dýnamískrar upplifunar á *physis*, hvort heldur gegnum náttúruna, hugsunina, heimspekiskrif eða aðrar leiðir. Vikið er að hugsuðum eins og Goethe og John Muir og hugmyndum þeirra beitt til að tengja kenningar Gadamers og Emersons við vistræn sjónarhorn. Einnig er skoðað hvernig tungumálið virðist taka á sig hlutverk Guðs eða guðlegs Anda í samtímahugsun og sýnt fram á hvernig bæði þessi sjónarhorn ýta undir upplifun á hinu handanlæga. Þannig er dreginn fram mikilvægur samhljómur milli Gadamers og Emersons hvað það snertir að Gadamer heldur tungumálinu á lofti en Emerson frumspekinni, en báðir hafa þeir upplifun af hinu handanlæga í huga í því sambandi.

Í 8. kafla eru færð rök fyrir því að túlkunarfræði Gadamers, með kennilegri áherslu sinni á tungumálið, gæti reynst gagnleg hvað það varðar að móta samtímalega orðræðu sem gæti rennt stoðum undir þá hugsjón Hadots að lifa í samræmi við skynsemina. Litið er til endurskoðunarsinnaðra

og frumspekilegra túlkana á Emerson og bent á í framhaldinu að sjónarhorn í anda frumspeki annars vegar og áherslunnar á tungumálið hins vegar búa yfir mikilvægum möguleikum þegar kemur að því að móta orðræðu um heimspekilegar iðkanir og að hvort viðhorf um sig geti höfðað til fólks af ólíku tagi. Hugað er að því hvað rökvísi, eðlisfræði og siðfræði upplifunarinnar gætu falið í sér með tilliti til beitingar á viðfangsefni dagsins í dag. Í ljósi áherslu Hadots á mikilvægi upplifunar á hinu almenna, andstætt áherslu Foucaults á sjálfssköpun, er því haldið fram að Gadamer og Emerson hafi fram að færa nálganir sem láta í té dýnamískar upplifanir á hinu almenna með aukinni áherslu á fjölbreytileikann, nálganir sem geta komið sér vel í samtímanum. Lagður er fram „matseðill“ hvað varðar hið almenna, sem hefur að geyma allt frá hlutlægum nálgunum yfir í dýnamískar og fljótandi nálganir. Dregnar eru upp nokkrar verklegar nálganir sem tengjast því að sigrast á afbrýðisemi fyrir tilstilli reynslu af heildrænum sjónarhornum og með því að einbeita sér að líðandi stund. Jafnframt er litið til einstaklingseðlis, samfélags og auðs sem dæma um þætti í nútímanum sem heimspeki sem lífsmáti ætti að veita athygli og taka í þjónustu sína.

Í stuttu máli felur doktorsritgerðin í sér víðtæka nálgun á heimspeki sem lífsmáta og dregur jafnframt upp útlínur þeirrar myndar sem slík heimspeki gæti tekið á sig í samtímanum. Þessi mynd hvílir á hugmyndum Hadots á hið handanlæga og hið almenna og mótar á þeim grunni dýnamískari kost sem sækir í smiðju Gadamers og Emersons. Að mörgu leyti leggja Gadamer og Emerson fram sjónarhorn sem bæta og vega hvort annað upp. Í því sambandi má benda á hvernig Gadamer leggur áherslu á endanleika mannverunnar, opnun hennar gagnvart öðrum og gildi hefðarinnar, en Emerson heldur á lofti óendanleika mannverunnar, þeirri iðju að hlusta á sjálfa(n) sig, þeirri nauðsyn að brjótast úr viðjum hamlandi siða í samfélaginu og mikilvægi frumspekinnar. Undir þessum ágreiningsefnum býr sameiginlegur áhugi Gadamers og Emersons á hugmyndum um fegurð, skipulag, hið almenna, samhljóm og gæsku – en þessar hugmyndir má einnig finna í heimspeki fornaldar. Í ritgerðinni er því haldið fram að viðhorf sem leggja áherslu á tungumálið annarsvegar og frumspekileg viðhorf hins vegar kunni að eiga fleira sameiginlegt en virðist við fyrstu sýn. Ýmsar heimspekilegar iðkanir, í anda þess sem Hadot kallar „andlegar æfingar“, eru leiddar af hugsun Gadamers og Emersons, til viðbótar við nokkrar iðkanir sem leiddar eru af kenningum úr fornöld, og þannig er haldið fram fjölþættri nálgun á iðkanir sem renna má stoðum undir með skírskotun til ýmissa orðræðuhefða sem skipta máli í samtímasamhengi.

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